



Lazy Dungeon Master



Volume 19 – The Mysterious Sisters

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Volume Nineteen - The Mysterious Sisters

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Chapter 200 - New Employees

Sleepsword Siesta wound up being added to the dungeon's named monster list.

I was careless. Looks like the magic sword was a monster.

Because of that, I headed back to the dungeon, [Cave of Desires]. I was just going through it all day-by-day, but that really did take a while. Let's check over the situation again. After sleeping for a day, I called for Rei.

"Let me check over what's going on, yeah?"

"Yes, master."

First of all was the dungeon.

Even though there were D-Rank adventurers and below training in the upper floors as ever, there were adventurers at the C-Rank level diving into the dungeon to target the Iron Golems. At the moment, it was a bit unreasonable for them to hope for magic sword blade golems.

Even if the riddle area's gone, making it down the spiral staircase just beyond that is a spectacular way to risk your life... Nn? There are more traps there now. Why are there places that have spears popping out from the walls?

"Ah, there were quite a few adventurers making it to the warehouse area, so I added them."

"Hmm. Good decision. It'd be troublesome if too many of them got blade golems from the warehouse."

So Rei's the one that added them? She did a great job with that.

"How many people have made it to the warehouse area?"

"Eight parties. One party was annihilated at the spiral staircase, four parties just examined the Irregular Golems, and for the magic swords that the final three parties took away, three swords were stone, with the other three being iron, six swords in total. No parties made it beyond the warehouse."

So one party was annihilated? My condolences, and thanks for the treat. So six blade golems shipped in a month... that might be a good pace? Let's

replenish them later.

“The inn?”

“We now have five people after gaining two new people, but there nothing is particularly different. There wouldn’t be much fluctuation in customers within a month, after all.”

Well, that’s how it’d be even with getting new staff. Two new people are working at the inn now. It looks like they’re staying at the inn, but maybe I should expand the employee dormitory? The Dungeon Battle’s over, so it should be peaceful for a little while.

“Come to think of it, what sort of monsters are those newcomers? They both had cat ears, so are they a were beast-type like Misha?”

“Umm, they aren’t monsters. They’re beastkin.”

... Beastkin? Could those be summoned with DP?

Exceptions like me could be summoned through the gacha, but there shouldn’t be any things that are non-monster people (What Rokuko calls ‘humans’) or beastkin.

At the very least, it’s not in my catalog. I don’t think that Rei would be able to summon something that I, the Dungeon Master, can’t though...

“How did you summon them with DP?”

“Ah, I did not use DP. I fed and employed the passing beastkin adventurers. I went with master’s beloved policy of getting the maximum result at the lowest cost.”

Rei spoke with a smile filling her face.

“Umm. In other words, they’re not under the dungeon’s control?”

“They aren’t, but is that a problem?”

... How could it not be a problem!?

“No, wait, wait. I haven’t heard anything though?”

“Eh, but I received permission from Rokuko-sama?”

“Seriously? ... I’ll talk to her later... well, umm. Isn’t them not being under the dungeon’s control a problem?”

“They are only doing the things in the inn, so they are temporarily employed

through the Adventurer Guild acting as an intermediary. There haven't been any problems in the last two weeks."

"It's alright then... I guess?"

"We can simply report to the guild if they cause any sort of problem, so we only need to deal with them if our secret is exposed. There are no problems."

"Oh, so clear-cut..."

Able to think about things so unexpectedly severe, Rei is a precious existence for our dungeon. I've usually been making those kinds of decisions, but I've gotten a bit more easy-going.

I sat up and started over.

"What did you do with the 50,000 DP I gave you?"

"Eh? That... other than the additional traps, everything went into my enhancements."

"... Huh? Rei's enhancements?"

"Yes. My enhancements. It was to increase the dungeon's fighting capability."

Hold up. That was meant to be used to summon newcomers...

... But we have newcomers—though they're working here as a job—so I guess Rei using the rest how she wanted isn't a problem?

Hmm, I'm a bit bothered that she used it to strengthen herself, but it's Rei. Let's just go with it being alright.

"That so? How are Kinue-san and Nerune doing?"

"Kinue has been working on increasing her cooking repertoire. Nerune has been absorbed in studying magic formations. She is still excited over the magic tools you gave her."

Kinue-san's buying cooking recipes with her salary, while Nerune's been excitedly talking to Kantra about magic formations. Looks like they're both living their lives to the fullest.

As for Rei, it looks like she was happy that I had left my work to her. It's great that she's so loyal.

I heard enough, so I decided to go see Rokuko.

Naturally, it was to talk about the newcomers.

“Oi Rokuko! Let’s talk for a bit.”

“What is it? You want to use the Godly Comforter?”

“That’s that and this is this. It’s about the new people we hired.”

“Eh, even though it’s been so long?”

It might’ve been ‘so long’ to Rokuko, but I just heard about it for the first time.

“They were just hired through the Adventurer Guild. Rei suggested it and I thought about it.”

“But it’d be bad if our inn’s secret was exposed though?”

“It’s not like we’d tell the part-time employees something like that. It’s also not like our inn’s shady. Right?”

“What about the golems?”

“They’re just ordinary Clay Golems that Kehma summoned. We’re going with the pretense that you’re resupplying their magical power, it’s not weird at all.”

“What about the cooking?”

“Kinue’s doing the cooking. We barely use DP to get food nowadays, and although we use DP for the ingredients, it just looks like we’re getting it from the storehouse and [Storage].”

“The onsen...”

“The part-timers are entrusted with the inn’s reception and serving customers in the dining area. Cleaning is taken care of through [Cleanup] and Kinue’s hobbies, while the hot water is just seen as [Some sort of magic tool]. Ah, the reception’s register is like that too.”

Huh? Somehow... did Rokuko just defeat me in logic? I can’t argue at all. It looks like the part-timers aren’t a problem at all. Rather, isn’t it a good idea to hire part-timers and concentrate wholly on the dungeon?

“By the way, we’re offering meals and rooms to the part-timers for free for their payment. We’re paying a bit to the guild for the handling charges, but considering the inn’s profits, it’s tiny.”

... Rokuko’s seriously grown up recently.

“By the way, were they interviewed?”

“Un, by me, Rei, and Ichika. Rather, I called for you too, but you were asleep.”

Come to think of it, there was a time when Rokuko came back here during the stuff with the Dungeon Battle huh.

It also feels like I was told about something...

Hmm, maybe I should have a talk with them too?

“Could you call them over now?”

“Eh? Hmm, well, it should be alright if it’s right now. It’s about time they got off work.”

“In that case, please call them in for an interview.”

“Got it. I’ll tell Rei. Don’t fall asleep waiting alright?”

Rokuko got in touch with Rei.

All things considered, those part-timers... what kind of people are they? I’m basically on their employer’s side, so I have to be stern... Aah, I’m getting nervous.

Author Note:

We’re finally at 200... thinking back, it’s already been one and a half years since I started this series hasn’t it? As always, thank you so much.

Chapter 201 - The Interview

As I waited in the owner's room, I heard a knock at the door.
It looks like the two part-timers arrived.

"Come in."

When I gave permission for them to enter...

"Excuse me~!"

"Excuse me."

The door swung open rather vigorously, and a dog entered with a... rabbit? I don't know for sure, but an olive brown-eared, big boobed, animal-eared adventurer in a gym uniform entered alongside a blonde dog-eared girl with glasses who wore a white doctor's robe. Both of their ears were tipped with white fur.

They'd changed out of the maid cosplay outfit that was the inn's uniform, but what was with their current outfits? Their characters are deep from the start, oi.

"... Amazing looks you two have going there."

"Nkyuu! These clothes are super easy to move in! Found them in the dungeon!"
"Yeah, it's the same for me. These feel considerably functional. They might have cost several gold coins if I bought them in the Imperial Capital."

Ah, come to think of it, I put those as dungeon treasures huh. Gym clothes, doctor robes, glasses, that sort of stuff. I didn't think that anyone would actually wear them though, but it is a fact that the Imperial Capital does sell stuff weird stuff like these... eh? Wait. Why did I suddenly feel a chill down my back?
Eh, well, alright. It's our first meeting, so I'll start with a self introduction.

"I'm Kehma, this village's Village Chief and working as a secretary to the inn's owner. Sorry for not being able to participate in the interview from a few days ago, but I had some business to take care of at the time. Umm, sorry, what are your names?"

"I'm Setsuna—a grappler. You look tired?"

"I'm Nayuta, an alchemist. Pleased to meet you, Village Chief-san. Do you want medicine that would allow you to work for twenty-three hours a day?"

... What sort of demonic medicine is that? Heck no! Also, isn't stuff like that addictive?

"It's just some nutritious drinks, there aren't any side effects. An energy drink for concentration and a stamina drink for endurance. Its effects are weaker than a potion's though, so the amount it recovers isn't quite as visible, but its cost performance is great. Anyone can make use of an alchemist with some skill to them."

Sounds wicked. In various meanings.

"Let's see, you two were adventurers right? Why are you here?"

"We walked here!"

Not that.

As I held back my retort to Setsuna's immediate response, Nayuta answered. It'll probably be better to listen to her explanation.

"Umm, I'm in a party with my sister, but our original plan was to pass through here and head to Sia. Then when we got to the village, it was way bigger than the info we had about it said. The dungeon was unexpectedly great, so we decided to earn a bit from it. As you see, we got something good."

Looks like suddenly changing your plans like that is common for adventurers. Not many of them plan things out too thoroughly. When it looks like they can earn money somewhere, they do. When it looks like they can't, they pass on by. A very undecided schedule, huh.

"... Hmm. So, you're sisters? You look fairly different though?"

"My sister and I have different fathers. We're half-sisters... I'd be happy if you didn't ask about our family matters too much."

Sisters with a different father huh... Looks like they have a complicated background, probably shouldn't touch on that subject.

By the way, contrasting Nayuta's golden retriever-like blonde hair, Setsuna has some seriously beast-like brown hair.

"By the way, although I'm a dog beastkin, my sister is half dog half rabbit.

Most often, beastkin will become one of their parents' kind, but although rarely, mixes can be born too."

"Dograbbit. I'm a rare mixed breed!"

With that, Setsuna turned around and showed me her tail. It really did look like it was averaged out between a rabbit's and a dog's.

Beastkin mixed breeds. So those exist? Now that she mentions it, I can see Nayuta's bushy dog tail even from her front, but I couldn't see Setsuna's tiny fluff until she turned around.

I wonder if a cat and dog would make a catdog, or a lion and tiger a liger...

Now I kind of want to know, would a horse and deer make an idiot?

"Is it alright if I ask why you two became adventurers?"

"Nkyuu, Nayuta, you explain."

"It's not much of a story. Our village was extinguished by monsters. Common enough right? Ah, you should be careful about that black wolf."

"A-ah, the black wolf? It came last winter. I don't know if it'll come again."

"... Is that so."

Nayuta furrowed her brows, fixing the position of her glasses as though to conceal it.

If Rin were here, it could help out with making a setting where they get their revenge in the dungeon.

I don't know what would happen after that though.

"So, what do you think about working at our inn?"

"It's great! There's lots of tasty stuff and we even have time to go into the dungeon."

"We'd be thankful if you decide to continue employing us for a while. There are various rare magic tools you can get from the dungeon that I'm super interested in as an alchemist. You even got the register and massage chair from it right?"

"Yeah. I'll hire you to continue working, but if you want, would you like to be employed here permanently and settle down here? There aren't many young female adventurers, the village would welcome you."

Currently, the ratio between men and women in Golen Village is around seven-to-three. That's including our inn.

Most adventurers are men to start with. There are people who migrated from Sia with their wives, but I should be making it possible for the villagers to be able to look for marriage partners as the Village Chief yeah?

"That sounds good too, the food here is amazing. What do you think, Nayuta?"

"Right, I'll think about it. This place could be our base we settle down in."

I didn't expect much, but it looks like they'll mostly willing.

"Other than that, do you have any requests or questions? Like a wage raise, things like that."

"Free meals and inn fees are enough for wages... My sister eats a lot, so it's really helpful."

"Nkyuu, I'm ashamed. Sorry for being a no-good sisteeeeer..."

"Yeah yeah. I do have a question, though... who is Kuro-senpai? A brilliant assassin? Ahh, umm, you don't have to answer if it's something that would risk our lives if you did. I was just a little curious since we have the same ears. It's really strange that she's able to fight us head on at that age."

"Kuro-chan's super strong! She's still growing, she'll almost definitely be an A-Rank adventurer in the future!"

"Ahh, yep. Well, even I don't really know."

Kuro, that is, Meat Kuroinu's origin is unknown even to me, her master. I just know that she's a dog eared beastkin. Judging by her hair and eye color, I do think she has some hero blood in her though.

At any rate, she's currently giving 160 DP a day right now. She's even worth way more than the 85 DP Gozoh, who's our village's adventurer representative, is giving. I could get just how abnormal she is from that alone. How'd she get like this? Is she talent personified?

"Right, I haven't asked about your ranks have I? What are they?"

"We're both C-Rank. I think we're as strong as B-Ranks though. We just haven't taken the promotion exam."

"Aristocrats are people with tons of troublesome things. You get a lot of taxes when you become B-Rank, so it's easier to just stay at C-Rank and not be tied down by that stuff. Especially as a beastkin, there's lots of countries that are annoying about it."

So it's like that huh. It feels like I've understood the reason why there are so many C-Rank adventurers.

After that, the interview turned into an idle chat for a while before we finished.

The idiotic—... the carefree Setsuna, and the firm Nayuta.

They're irregular in various ways, but they appear to be balanced as sisters. I can't help but say that they're good sisters.

However, I strengthened my vigilance towards the two from this interview.

"That Setsuna... her elder sister dodged my question."

When I asked why they came, she answered saying they walked. It's a common enough misunderstanding in Japanese. But in English, 'why' is a very different word compared to 'how'.

Is it like that in this world?

I asked Rokuko.

"—Come to think of it, that was a strange answer, wasn't it?"

Now then, just who are these sisters?

Author Note:

* [Japanese -> Translation into other world's language by the skill -> Re-translate into Japanese with the skill] is SUPER accurate, so even in extreme cases, "Uooooh—!" wouldn't turn into something like "Fish—!".

Chapter 202 - The Mysterious Sisters

The two part timers are mysterious.

After the interview, I understood that after I looked into them.

“The elder sister, her daily DP income... is 0...!?”

That fact was like a thunderclap.

Daily DP income is something like a measure of strength, but even the average C-Rank would be around 50-70 DP. In particular, if they know skills, it'll tend to be higher.

And that's why her 0 DP is something I've only seen for people who are connected to dungeons like me, Rokuko, and Haku-san or people who have no combat ability at all, like how Meat was when I first picked her up.

However, I'm thinking that it might be something like the effect of a concealment skill that I don't know about.

The younger sister, Nayuta, is 85 DP a day... Around the same level as Gozoh. She said she was an alchemist, so she probably knows various skills. By the way, Ichika jumped from around 60 DP to 75 DP when she learned those skills.

“Wow, I didn't notice at all. As expected of Kehma, you focus on different things~”

“Don't look away from stuff like this, oi.”

“B-but there's no need to look at individual DP though right?”

“It's a good way to measure an intruder's strength, see?”

“Uuu, I got it! I'll pay attention next time.”

Even so... the younger sister has a DP? Hmm.

I don't understand why the other one's giving 0 DP, but vigilance towards them is essential. Particularly towards the elder sister.

“Hey, Kehma. Maybe you could find something out if you transform into Setsuna?”

“... Hoh. Let's give it a shot then, [Super Transformation].”

The best way to learn about your opponent is to become them. Thus, I used

[Super Transformation] to become the elder sister of the two part timers—Setsuna.

Oh, her chest is heavy. Profoundly so.

And there's always this sense of incongruity in my lower half when I transform into a woman... but it doesn't feel like that this time... nn?

...

It's there!? No, what? It's there!!

U-uh? The heck? What's going on? A cross dresser? No, these breasts are real...

...

...!?

When I checked it out, there are both a man's thing and a woman's thing.

What?

What's going on? No, right...

A hermaphrodite?

Even her sex is half and half. I'm kind of wanting to believe this is just a flaw from [Super Transformation]... However, it's probably better to think of this as reality and really real after taking a close look at the person herself and using [Super Transformation].

“Perhaps... are hermaphrodites common in this world?”

“No, umm... I wonder? It's probably unusual?”

The men and women I've met so far are definitely either one or the other, but I've never gone so far as to verify what's between their legs. Rather, I would've thought that Setsuna was also a woman if I hadn't checked like this. Even in her bloomers, there wasn't a bulge.

You wouldn't normally check, right?

... Rokuko is definitely a woman. The only one I know that for certain is just Rokuko...!?

“It's alright, Meat, Ichika, Rei, and the others don't have anything growing there.”

“A-ah. Thanks?”

“Umm, you're welcome?”

I ended up hearing information that I both did and didn't want to hear.

For now, let's summarize what I know about Setsuna.

- Appears to understand Japanese
- 0 DP per day. Is she someone related to a dungeon, or does she have an unknown skill?
- Is a hermaphrodite.

That is all.

And now their identities are becoming even more mysterious.

I don't even know if they're truly sisters. Rather, it's fine if they're sisters...? Well, it's alright. Even those Uzoh Muzoh brothers are brothers despite not being related by blood. The elder sister's a hermaphrodite, but it's probably still alright?

Still though, what's their goal here? Even after transforming, I still have no clue.

I gave the transformation a shot after Rokuko recommended it, but it only changes my form into them. It doesn't give me their memories... I don't know if it would after raising its level though.

What should I do now?

... Let's wait and see for now.

Yep, the usual Japanese way of maintaining the status quo. Put off troubling problems. If the problem resolves itself in time, it's best to not meddle with it. What? The problem might get worse, you say? Do your best, future me.

"... Hmm, well. Just watch them for now. They may take advantage of the interview and make a move."

"Kay~. I'm the one who hired them, so I'll take responsibility!"

I don't know how she planned on taking responsibility, but for now, I decided to go to sleep after cancelling the transformation.

I returned to my room, laid down, and invoked Sleepsword Siesta! ... I fell asleep within ten seconds.

*

I was concerned about it, so I decided to visit the mysterious sisters directly. Together with Meat as my bodyguard. Nayuta, the younger sister, was sitting at the reception desk right then. As for the problem elder sister—ah, according to

the map, looks like she's sleeping in her room.

When I went to Nayuta, she bowed and greeted me... Looks like she was reading a book. She's working, but she was using it to pass the time since there weren't any guests.

"Yo, how's it going?"

"Nothing noteworthy. Good as usual."

"Oh? What were you reading?"

"A collection of upper class magic formations. See?"

With that, Nayuta opened up the book and showed me.

A collection of magic formations was like how a book of poems would have a collection of poems inside it. There was just a single magic formation on the two-page spread... Time... stop... subspace, huh. Hmm. Its effect looks similar to [Storage]'s. About half of it's missing though.

"Hmm. There's no commentary or notes on it?"

"... Oh? Village Chief-san, are you interested in magic formations?"

"No, Nerune loves stuff like this though. She'd be happy if she could read it."

"Ah, I already lent Nerune-san the elementary and middle class ones I had on me."

In that case, I'm thankful. The range of our strategies is expanding more and more.

By the way, elementary class magic formations appear to be simple to analyze, with the middle class ones having commentary on their uses for when they're invoked. For the upper class magic formations, it just has what was discovered written without what they do.

"What does this magic formation do?"

"I'm not sure, but I can guess from looking at the magic characters... this is [Time], this is [Advance], this is [Separate]... so I believe it is for a doppelganger or something."

"Hmm? ... Really now?"

The characters that Nayuta pointed out were respectively [Time], [Stop], and [Subspace]. She was wrong about them, but there's no reason for me to point it out.

"However, there are times when the characters written down are nonsensical in order to keep the effects secret. This character here, the one that looks like [Advance], it might actually mean the opposite because of the piece that is missing. The part that distinguishes between the two is missing, so I can't tell."

Ah, so it's something like that...? Translation Function-san, you even supplement the missing pieces? You are amazing.

"That so? Sounds difficult."

"That's how it goes. To continue, there are hints to conjecture at what the missing pieces in this magic formation are on other pages, so if you apply enough of them, it can explain more parts and—"

She let me go thirty minutes later.

That was a long talk. Moreover, she lent me an introductory primer on alchemy, but yeah... to actually read it and become an alchemist and shave away my sleeping time even more? Don't wanna.

Nayuta is an unexpectedly aggressive narrator. The meaning of her name appears to be [A Super Large Unit of Time] and that's definitely reflected in how long she talks.

... Setsuna's appears to mean [A Very Short Unit of Time], does that mean she talks fast?

With that, I came across Setsuna, who should've been asleep in her room, in the hallway.

"Ah, Village Chief-san? Morning~. It's the afternoon though~"

"Ah, morning. It's not a problem if you just woke up."

She was walking down the hallway in her gym clothes. Her thighs are tempting in various ways. My eyes kept trying to look at her crotch, but I managed to avoid it somehow. It'd be bad if she caught me looking...

"That's right! Hey Village Chief-san, are you free? We haven't had a mock fight yet. You're the last one."

"Why? —wait, the last one?"

"I've been asking adventurers that are C-Rank and up in the village for mock fights. I've won all of them too. I asked Gozoh-san too, but Village Chief-san and the others are only C-Rank at this dungeon right? Want to fight?"

"Why not have one with Me—... with Kuro? You did it the other day right?"

"I'm fine with having another go since she's strong, but I already fought Kuro-senpai. I want to complete this place!"

Right, so rather than being a quick talker, she's quick to use her fists?

I glanced at Meat. Looks like she lost, but she also looks motivated.

... I also kind of want to try something out.

What to do?

Chapter 203 - Mock Fight

I decided to accept the mock fight.

It was alright to just refuse or leave it to Meat, but I want to test out the clothes golem that I had record an A-Rank adventurer's movements (Misha's). Meat and Ichika have their own way of fighting, so they only use it for its power assist.

Because of all that, we went out to the inn's back yard. Meat was with me, of course. It'd obviously be bad to be alone with these two mysterious people.

"I'm good any time!"

"Please go easy on me, I'm usually in the rear as a mage."

I faced off against Setsuna. Not holding my sword, I was using gloves meant for mock fights. Misha's movements were based on a grappler's, so I can't use a sword. Well, she herself could probably use one, but I didn't have her show me how she used one.

However, magic is another case entirely. Doing the incantation for [Water], a ball of water floated above the ground.

"It'd be dangerous if I used fire after all."

"This is a mock fight, but it's alright if you don't hold back."

Setsuna warmed up by jumping around. Her chest also leapt up and down. It's fun to watch, but isn't that painful?

"Well then, I'm coming."

"Yeah, I'll take your first shot."

Setsuna held up her fists. At the same moment, I shot forward with the ball of water.

I left my body to the clothes golem while I focused on using magic. It was a bit painful, but I had to put up with it.

I came at her with a punch—which felt like it would give me some muscle pains by itself later on—but she blocked it with the back of her hand, pushing it aside. As for the ball of water, she punched out and burst it with her other hand.

"Hey now, weren't you a mage?"

"This'll turn into one-on-one fight anyway, yeah? I figured it was better to just skip the hassle."

The conventional clothes golem's performance couldn't reproduce most of Misha's, an A-Rank adventurer's, martial arts. At most, slowly imitating her slowed-down movements was the limit.

However, right now, I'm able to reproduce about 50% of Misha's ability. This was thanks to the newly developed supporting joints with orichalcum in them.

"Ahaha, Village Chief-san, you're something."

"I'm overworking myself quite a bit here though."

Setsuna's fist blasted out towards my face, piercing through the area. My neck shot backwards, moving my head to avoid the blow, but the jolting movement rocked my head, giving me some damage. Ugeeeeh.

My body's going to break down if I do too much here. Maybe I should just focus on enduring these abrupt, crazy movements rather than using magic?

Setsuna's attacks kept on flowing smoothly. Low kick, roundhouse kick, backhand fist, head-butt, grab, elbow, jab, backhand fist, downward fist... I don't have any time to breathe. I would've been knocked out by the first strike if I didn't have Misha's footwork helping me out here.

The damage I took from getting shook about was relatively light since I was avoiding her attacks with the minimum movement required, geeh... uoh, I suddenly swayed backward there.

There's a bit of distance between us. I started chanting the incantation for [Water] and—ugeh, I got interrupted. I don't actually have to chant anything, but I really don't want to show her that I don't need to. Faking the incantations is also out of the question since there's a chance that Setsuna might realize it. I barely finished stuttering out the incantation all the way and sent a water ball her way, but—

"Ho—"

She easily burst it apart.

I give up, there's nothing I can use. My head's all fuzzy, I need to breathe.

Woah, my vision just went black. Guhaaah. I just want to go unconscious and go

to sleep right here.

"H-hah, c-can we stop here?"

"Eeeh? But it just started to get fun."

"I'm at my limi—woah!"

I lost my footing and fell backwards out of breath.

"—Kuh."

"Take thi—...!?"

I grabbed the chest of Setsuna's clothes as she started swinging her fist down towards me with all I had, throwing her over me.

Bang!

It was so unexpected and beautifully done that you could call it a perfect [Full Point].

... Come to think of it, there were moves like that too huh...

"Nkuu. You got me, Village Chief-san. It really just looked like you were falling."

"... Y-yeah. It was just by chance... Well, that should be enough."

"I lost huh... that's the first time I've lost in this village."

"It's more like a draw. Rather, it's my loss. I can't even move anymore."

My breathing's already ragged. Meanwhile, Setsuna is still full of spirit. Moreover, it looks like she still has a trump card left over. I mean, she hasn't used any skills at all.

I'd definitely die from oxygen deprivation if we kept going. I should put a limiter or something on the clothes golem...

Rather, I was thinking about going and losing at a reasonable spot there, but ended up not. Grah. No choice but to insist that it was my loss.

"No, you said you were as strong as a B-Rank and there's no doubting that. It's my loss, I give up."

"No no, for Village Chief-san to do such a great throw there at the end, you're strong."

"No no no, it's obvious that I can't even move anymore. It's my complete loss."

"No no no no, it was my loss the moment you decided it with the throw."

Both of us still on the ground, it somehow turned into a downward spiral of us

each trying to lose to the other.

... For this fight, the winner is the loser!

"Ah, then how about a draw?"

"... Alright, let's agree on that."

"We tied then! — Well, I still think that I'm the one who lost though!"

"The heck, I'm the one who thinks they lost! — Let's stop. We'll just do that all over."

"Ahaha."

In the end, we agreed to compromised and decided that it was a draw.

"Good work. As expected of Goshujin-sama."

"I said Village Chief-san was strong, but your stamina is beyond abysmal. Are you injured anywhere?"

"Hahaha..."

Holding my body up, Meat handed me a cup of water. I moved my tired arm to take it from her and drank...

Aah, that was great.

At the very least, I figured out that I could use a good amount of Misha's martial arts. Looks like using it won't kill me.

Of course, even if I were killed, I'm transformed into [Myself], so I'd be alright. Should I say I'm relieved that it wasn't needed? I mean, I really don't want to try out dying.

By the way, even if the thing I'm transforming into is myself, I still suffer the ability restriction. It doesn't affect my physical ability, but I can't use things like my signature move, [Create Golem]. It's the same if I transform into other people too. I can't use most of their abilities at all.

"Hey, Kuro-senpai. Want to have a go? I lost to Village Chief-san, so I'm pretty pumped right now~"

"... I accept. I won't lose this time."

Oi, we we tied!

I retorted in my head.

Meat faced off against Setsuna, her wooden knife made for mock fights held in her hands.

And then a high level mock fight began.

Slicing, sweeping, striking, dodging, kicking, getting hit, grabbing, twisting, throwing, repeating it all. Everything kept happening as even their positions switched back and forth. When I thought one was to the left, they were to the right. When I thought they were to the right, they were suddenly soaring upward. My eyes are spinning just from watching them.

... I still haven't made any orichalcum joint supports for Meat yet though...

I collected and used all of the orichalcum I'd used in [White Beach] for my supports, but the orichalcum for Meat's will be coming from the orichalcum sword I got from [Father].

(I finished the research and development of it during the Dungeon Battle's preparation phase, so I made it immediately.)

Huh? Was I moving like that just a bit ago too? Seriously? No wonder I felt so dizzy.

"Fuh—! Hyah!"

"Kuh, but...!"

Just then, in the instant that Meat slashed down towards Setsuna with her wooden knife, Setsuna broke the knife with her fist.

"Guess it's my win?"

"Kuh, I can still go."

Meat threw the broken knife towards Setsuna, running along the ground towards her with her remaining knife. There was a dull sound of something hard hitting flesh as they passed each other. The broken knife she'd thrown at Setsuna dropped at Setsuna's feet.

What just happened...?

"U-ugu..."

"Unfortunate. Almost, but not quite, Kuroinu-chan."

Meat crouched forward, her hand pressed against her head.

Apparently, Meat tried to slash at her shin as she passed her, but it looks like rather than meeting her mark, she was knee'd in the head. That looks painful.

"I lost..."

"Wanna have another go? I can keep on however long you want. I love strong

children, so come at me!"

"Umm..."

Meat glanced at me. I gently put my hand on Meat's head... Ah, I can't use [Healing] either. [Super Transformation]'s restrictions are pretty harsh.

"Well, I'm going to head back to my room. Do what you want."

"... I'll go too."

"That so? Well then, Setsuna, let's stop here. Please practice with Kuro next time."

"Muu, unfortunate. I'll let you go for today, but I'll definitely win against Village Chief-san next time!"

"Well, you can just say you won already. I'm tired, so I'm going to head to bed. Night."

"That's no good~! We'll have a proper bout to decide it, night~!"

I waved to Setsuna as I returned to my room.

Ending [Super Transformation], I used [Healing] on Meat and myself. Aaah, that's so much better.

Setsuna is generally strong. I don't know how strong Nayuta is, but she's very knowledgeable about alchemy.

... I'd like to keep these sisters as allies. They aren't unreasonable existences like the Hero or Rin, so I think I could handle them if something happens. At least, I think I could.

Let's think about what to do with them while I sleep. I've already done enough today, it's time to clock out.

I wonder if I could use the godly comforter... no, let's stop there. I'm a child that can wait. It's not like I'm just wanting to use muscle soreness and fatigue as an excuse to stay asleep or anything. It's also not like I felt a bit of chills there for a moment or anything.

Chapter 204 - Peeping

After enjoying herself in those mock fights, Setsuna headed back her room at the inn.

Her work finished, Nayuta was waiting there.

“Oh, Onee-chan, did you have another mock fight? You have to use [Cleanup] or you’ll just smell sweaty, you know?”

“Eeeeh? It takes so much though... nnn~. Nayuta, you do it~”

“Yeah, yeah. [Cleanup], [Cleanup], and one more, [Cleanup].”

She used [Cleanup] like splashing her with water. Once she’d used it three times, she was completely clean.

“Onee-chan, who were you having the mock fight with? Kuroinu-senpai?”

“Nkyuu, Village Chief-san. Now I’ve completed this village’s C-Ranks! I lost though. Tehehe.”

“... For Onee-chan to lose... what happened?”

Seeing Setsuna smile awkwardly, Nayuta tilted her head to the side. Setsuna’s ability was that of a B-Rank’s, so she couldn’t imagine her losing to a C-Rank adventurer, much less a C-Rank adventurer who was actually a D-Rank everywhere but at this dungeon. Just what sort of method did he use?

“Right, right, I straight up lost in a grappling match!”

“Grappling match!? Not a hand-to-hand fight? I heard it as a rumor from the villagers, but wasn’t Village Chief-san a swordsman?”

“Village Chief-san himself said he was a mage. His stamina’s definitely like a mage’s, but his skill was like a first class grappler’s. He got super tired and looked dead tired but his movements didn’t change at all, it felt like his body knew all of the movements and was moving from sheer willpower!”

What Setsuna sensed was, in a certain way, very close to being correct.

“He does have black hair and eyes, so maybe he does have Hero blood in him? Or maybe he’s the Hero himself?”

“He reacted delicately to Onee-chan’s boke, so the chances of it are pretty big.

But then is that rank a rank from him hiding his identity? Or is it the pattern he's actually hiding his S-Rank? Then again, I can understand that Onee-chan lost if he is a Hero. Heroes have crazy physical strength and cheat-like skills given from god... Did he train his body, or was that a skill? If it's a skill, with what sort of effect does—”

“Ahh, Nayuta? Are you done? My shift's coming up soon.”

“Ah, whoops.”

Nayuta stopped talking for a moment before taking a breath and starting again.

“... So, what about Village Chief-san’s magic? He had to use something if he’s a mage right?”

“Hmmm.”

Setsuna thought back to the magic that Kehma used. The strong impression she got from other things from him overshadowed his magic, so even though she could remember it, it took a bit of time.

“He used [Water] a bit. I mean, it was a mock fight, so he only used it to distract me.”

“Heeh... Well, shall we report that he’s promising? He obviously knows other magic. He wouldn’t be calling himself a mage if he only knew a single magic so —ah.”

Nayuta realized she was starting to talk a lot again, so she decided to cut herself off there.

“Considering it was by chance, we came across quite a find, haven’t we?”

“... By the way, I think that girl’s a Toy after all.”

“Kuroinu-senpai? She really is abnormally strong for her age. Moreover, with her black hair, eyes, ears, and brown skin... the possibility of her being a Toy is extremely high.”

“If she is, what do we do?”

Nayuta thought for a moment before responding.

“... We’ll just report it for now and wait for further instruction. A little more intelligence gathering might be necessary.”

“Should we sent a message right away?”

"Yeah."

Deciding to take a safe approach to it for now, Nayuta began to write a message. Setsuna decided to change into her maid outfit and head to work.

*

It looks like they had that sort of conversation.

I asked Rokuko to have the menu's monitor function record it. The conversation happened when I was exhausted and sleeping, so it's already been over a day since it happened.

I turned off the monitor since I didn't intend to peep on her changing clothes... ah, was that already cut out? Yep. Rokuko's gotten able to think about stuff like that ahead of time hasn't she.

Report, message... and wait for instruction huh. Setting aside the bits about Heroes, what's this Toy thing? They said is was a high possibility Meat was one, but is that some title like Hero? Or is it more like an individual name? Meat can't remember her past much at all... is it like that? I wonder if it has to do with that... well, given her excellence, it might not be impossible.

... Come to think of it, I'd peeped at what the letter's contents were, but it really just looked like the activity report of adventurers staying safe. It wasn't even written in Japanese.

However, I didn't know the other party's name. The letter turned into a bird when it was finished being written and flew off somewhere. A carrier pigeon? Looks like she used a magic tool, but that's amazing.

"What to do... what to do..."

Really, more and more I don't know what to do. The more info we get on them, the more the enigma deepens. Can't I just ignore it and get back to sleep?

I've pretty much finished my part in contacting them, so the next step is theirs. And since they're also waiting for instructions, we're all just waiting on standby. I'll have them tell me if some letter bird comes flying in.

I decided to observe them with the monitor.

With a bit of searching, I found Setsuna waiting tables in the dining room. Her job was simple, she just accepted order tickets from guests and brought them

food made by Kinue-san. It looked like she'd already gotten used to it her cheerful smile was popular among the guests too.

"Nkyuu, here's your D set meal~"

"Ohh, thanks Setsuna-chan. Ya busy tonight?"

"Ahahaha, I might consider it if you win against me. Wanna have a mock fight?"

"Haha, there's no one in this village that can beat Setsuna-chan. Even Kuro-chan lost against ya right? I mean, Kuro-chan's the strongest in the village."

Setsuna generally treated the adventurer guests lightly, but she tilted her head in puzzlement over his statement.

"Eh? The strongest person in this village is Village Chief-san though?"

"Sure, Kuro-chan can't win against Kehma-san, but he's Kuro-chan's Goshujin-sama y'know?"

"Village Chief-san is strong. I lost against him."

"... Huh?"

The dining hall suddenly burst into an uproar from Setsuna's remark. Other adventurers cut into the conversation. They'd challenged Setsuna before—rather, they were challenged by her—and were promptly defeated.

"Oi hold up there, Kehma-san wasn't defeated, but defeated Setsuna-chan!?"

"It wasn't in gambling or wordplay or something?"

"Yep, it was in a mock fight. He's strong..."

"Seriously? Kehma-san, strong!? He's always sleeping though!"

"Now that you mention it, Village Chief Kehma is this dungeon's top progresser... right, there was talk about someone training Kuro-chan wasn't there?"

"Hey, did he seriously win? Village Chief-san... like, judging from looks, even I could win against Village Chief-san..."

"You could ask Kuro-senpai if you think I'm lying? She was there~"

All at once, everyone's gazes shot towards Meat Kuroinu, who worked there too.

Meat answered by nodding... However, even though there high chance that Meat would say anything that would favor me, since it was coupled with Setsuna herself saying that she lost, the trustworthiness of the news was high.

"Y-you were feeling sick right? Hey, were you having that once-a-month girl thing?"

"That's sexual harassment! Mou, perv!"

"Hebuogu!?"

Setsuna struck the guest with a bang.

The now-wounded guest flew away.

Though something at that level was just playing around to adventurers, so there was no problem. It'd be quite a big problem if this were Japan though.

"Ah, sorry."

"N-no, it was my bad. Ha, haha..."

"Well, I was in perfect condition. After fighting Village Chief-san, I fought against Kuro-senpai again and won~"

"I won't lose next time..."

"Hooh, I'm ready any time!"

The two held up their trays and locked eyes.

It felt like sparks were flying between them.

"You two, your hands aren't working?"

Kinue-san's voice came over from the kitchen, ending the topic there. However, the rumor that I won against Setsuna spread through the dining hall in no time, eventually making its way into the village.

...Crap. Even though we called it a tie, she's saying that she lost against me...

However, Setsuna played it out so naturally that it didn't look like she was scheming anything. Even if she was scheming something, what was her intention? To investigate the dungeon? Or maybe some investigation related to Heroes? Or maybe it was like she said in the interview and is chasing the [Black Wolf]...? Come to think of it, what is that Toy thing? Is she looking for them? At any rate, if they're reporting to someone and are waiting for instructions, I'll figure something out by looking at it. Probably.

In the end, I guess there's no choice but to wait and see how it plays out...

Chapter 205 - A Bit of Remodeling

I decided to leave the mysterious sisters alone until they get their instructions.

I thought about getting trying to get some information from Haku-san and Ontentoo, but unlike the time with Rin, this wasn't really so much of an emergency. It's better for me to collect information myself rather than owe them a debt. Let's set aside the conditions of someone's DP income being 0, there's a good chance that this [Toy] thing has nothing to do with dungeons.

And so I decided to mess around with the dungeon for the first time in a while.

Let's check out how it's doing.

Starting from the entrance is the entrance area, labyrinth area, the empty former riddle area, the spiral staircase that heads down to the warehouse area, which the warehouse area then divides into three branches.

The new riddle area leads to the arena and the boss room, the meadow area that's the dead-end campgrounds, and Feni's miniature garden area that heads towards the fire cavern that Rokuko made.

By the way, there's a hidden ceiling in the boss room for the core room. Nerune's laboratory is there too, but that's another story.

Now then, let's renovate two spots this time.

First is the warehouse.

I've been using it as a substitute for storage space so far, but there'll be adventurers making their way into it here soon, so that won't do anymore. With that being the case, I'll make a proper warehouse in a spot that no one will come to. [Warehouse Area (Real)]. It'll be a warehouse completely isolated from the outside, just like the thug human farm I left to Rei... Honestly, we don't even need that anymore. We have a pretty huge income just from the village. Besides, wouldn't it be increasingly unneeded with the next thing I'm thinking about?

With that, there's another thing I have my eye on. The riddle area. I'm going to renovate it.

The old riddle area turned into this after it was destroyed by Rin. There's no one there right now, so it's a good chance to do the renovations. I think I'll go with setting up the gimmick I thought up earlier. However, I'm not going to be building something that will obstruct people. I'll be making a small room on the side of the passage and make it look like they found a secret passage. The reason it can't be too big of a room is because it was inadvertently positioned just next to [Fire Cavern]. Well, there are several ways I could describe the small room.

It's a DP collection room.

That is, even if I'm calling it a DP collection room, it's not as though I'm going to be killing people in it. It's basically a [Jail]. There will be several cells about the size of a toilet stall that could fit one or two people set up. By confining people there, their DP per day would increase to six times the normal due to the locked up and jail effects.

So what will this jail be doing, you ask? I'll get adventurers to walk into it. There obviously wouldn't be people who'd just walk into such a small and suspicious room, so I'll give them a reward. I'll repay their DP income with items and money. Just a small portion of it, though.

If a person that's normally worth 50 DP is confined in the jail, they'd be worth 300 DP per day. If they do that, I'd still make a profit by spending around 100 DP of that for a silver coin. That'd be like 10,000 Yen a day for doing nothing. Maybe it'd be alright to just give them fifty copper, they'll just be sitting there doing nothing after all...? Actually, it might be better to give more as some kind of opening event.

*

With the renovations over, I brought Meat along as I went to give it a trial run. It wouldn't be a lie even if I reported it to the guild if I actually used it, so I have to go there myself.

If no one knew how to use it, no one could use it. That disaster from back with Uzoh and Muzoh in the magic sword test room was plenty enough for me. Besides, this time, it'll be even harder to understand how to use than the test

room. I'll need to report it.

Destroying the wall that lead to the hidden room, I made my way to the DP collection room.

The rooms were lined up like private toilet stalls. They were all jail cells, but I disguised them as ordinary doors to protect people's privacy.

Moreover, although all of the rooms are vacant right now, a red symbol will appear on the doors of cells that are in use. Just like a toilet stall.

"Shall we head in?"

"Yes."

I entered a cell with Meat. The only things that were there were two hourglass-type timers next to each other and the doors that would lock themselves through a mechanism. I also included a red button for emergencies as a measure of kindness.

The items and money I set up behind the scenes will fall into the payment hole once the timer hits zero after enough time passes.

Concerning their payment, something like a 'daily DP sensor' doesn't exist, so Rei and the others will have to do their best at manually doing it all behind the scenes. I say that, but since they won't be rewarding anything to those who stay less than twelve hours, they just need to check twice a day. The payment calculation itself will also be easy enough since they can use the calculator golem whenever they aren't needing to help someone at reception. It'll normally reward money with a few items sprinkled in occasionally.

We have too much money at this point because of the inn. We're depositing the money in the guild, but we're never really going to use it.

I turned the two hourglass timers upside down. They were small, but there's a golem mechanism in place so that they would take twelve hours to finish. Only one of the hourglasses allow for sand to drop at a time, so it ends up being twenty-four hours by the end. If they want to stay longer, they can just flip the completed hourglasses over to go again.

Everything I've seen tells me that adventurers are horrible at remembering things if I make it too complicated, so I made it as simple as possible.

Right now I'm planning on spending the next twenty-four hours in leisure as a test.

I laid my futon out inside the private room. I designed it so that it would just barely fit. Then, I laid down with Meat as my hug pillow as usual.
I'll eat some of the food that's in my [Storage] if I get hungry. Haaah...

*

Crap, there's no toilet... this is a serious flaw.
As expected, even I got woken up by Meat.
I got Rokuko to collect it this time, but humans can't go without using the toilet for a full day...

Should I put some sort of pot with a jelly in it to deal with that stuff in the room? Ah, crap. Jellies are monsters, so I can't put them in safety zones. What should I do about the restroom?

... Should I remove the safety zone? Toilets are indispensable.
For now, we took a toilet break and let twenty-four hours pass. Three silver coins dropped down into the payment hole located under the hourglasses with a clinking noise at the same time that the door unlocked.
Looks like the device is working properly... By the way, this isn't taking me being here into account. My daily DP is worth 0 after all.

Let's get an adventurer's point of view on it now.

"That's why I made that kind of facility. Ichika-sensei, what do you think about it?"

"What's with the '-sensei'... Eh whatever, first off the money's bad. Wouldn't it better better for 'em to just earn money like normal instead of going in there?"

I got an immediate fail.

Now that she mentions it, if they have the ability to make it past the labyrinth area, they'd earn a lot more money by hunting iron golems.

"It'd just be pocket money and gettin' locked up in such a small room would be horrible, let alone being alone for half a day..."

"... They could just sleep though?"

"Goshujin-sama's the only person who could sleep that much. Twelve hours is way too long. Ya can't get rid of the safety zone either, people wouldn't be able to be at ease in a dungeon without it."

... Now that she mentions it, I'm fine with it since the place is like my home,

but for anyone else it'd just be spending twelve hours in a dungeon, not knowing what or when something might happen.
So they can't rest without the safety zone huh.

"I'm stumped on the toilet part though."
"For a toilet ya can just have a pot and use [Cleanup] on it."
"Eh, that works? [Cleanup] is convenient."

[Cleanup] is seriously all-purpose. For it to even work for a toilet...

"Well, the earning's bad but if there's a jackpot kinda thing, it might work out. Goshujin-sama should know yeah? Like that time with the Uzoh Muzoh bros."

"Should I use a blade golem as bait?"

"Yeah! Like bein' able to get a magic sword just by waitin' for half a day. That'd make for a great story.—In fact, how 'bout we trade for the magic sword with gold coins?"

"Kukuku, Ichika. Are you some evil overlord?"

"Not as much as Goshujin-sama, kukuku~"

Ichika and I laughed evilly together.

It'd be a problem if we distributed too many magic swords and caused their value to drop, but that much wouldn't be a problem if we kept the demand high.

Moreover, since the blade golem is pretty close to an ordinary sword, it's pretty much a consumable item. It'll recover somewhat if magical power is poured into the magic stone in its core, but it's alright since it'll break sooner or later after doing it two or three times. From what I hear, there's a lot of other magic swords like that so it won't be a problem.

And so I went to go report the new facility to the guild.
That it would lock you up when you turn the hourglasses over, but would let you out immediately if you pressed the red button.
That you would obtain silver coins by waiting until the sand in the hourglass finished falling.
And that the two hourglasses each took twelve hours to finish.

With the above information, I earned ten silver.

There was an investigation commission sent out from the guild the following

day. Several adventurers headed to the DP collection room along with various items meant for killing time.

As a result of the several-day-long investigation, it was recognized as a “place that would give money and items if you waited twelve or twenty-four hours”. It looks like one of them was even lucky enough to get a magic sword. It also looks like that guy went to buy food and immediately returned for a second go at it. The result of his second time? Twenty copper.

After various things, the small room was dubbed the [Avarice Lodge]. There were a lot of people that slept through the whole twelve hours.

Since there was a chance at getting a hold of a magic sword without even having to do anything, there were a lot of people who went there. It ended up turning into a facility that generated a decent amount of DP.

Chapter 206 - Probing

Several days passed.

I was watching for that message bird coming back to the sisters, but it looks like the letter arrived through the guild instead.

And the letter was this:

[Please show this letter to the Village Chief.]

... They don't intend to hide it?

Well, because of that, Nayuta was bringing the letter to me. Keeping Meat at my side, I met with her in the parlor with a table between us. Setsuna wasn't here since she was working.

"Village Chief-san, a letter arrived from my client for you."

"Nn? Nayuta's client...? Who? It's not Rokuko I take it?"

"Yeah, it's a long term commission. Wakoku's daimyo... Ah, a daimyo is like an empire's emperor."

Wakoku. So it's showing up now...

"You two came from Wakoku?"

"Me? No, my name's definitely in Wakoku's style, but I'm from somewhere else. They're just employing me."

"Hoh... so, what does Wakoku's daimyo want with me?"

"Maybe to scout you? I reported that you were strong after all."

Ah, she didn't hide that either. Isn't she actually pretty open about all this? She might even tell me a few things if I asked her directly.

"... Oh, right right. Before that, could you check this out for a moment? I picked it up in the dungeon, but I don't know what it is."

Nayuta suddenly pointed a gun at me. It's a revolver-type pistol. She said she didn't know what it was, but she's pointing the muzzle at me with her finger on the trigger. My body jumped from the surprise.

... Meat responded to my subtle reaction, standing in front of me as though to block the way. Man this girl's so awesome...

“Oh, you reacted? As I thought, you—”

“That’ll happen if you suddenly send so much bloodthirst my way. And don’t you actually know the way to use that thing? It feels like you’re accustomed to it.”

“Mu, now that you mention it...”

Nayuta took her finger off of the trigger and pointed the gun down.

... By the way, I don’t recall putting something like that into the dungeon. It’s not even in the DP catalog in the first place, so Nayuta definitely brought it along herself.

Now that I’m taking a closer look at the gun, isn’t it odd? It’s a revolver, but there’s no hammer. Moreover, the revolver’s cylinder is copper... huh? There aren’t any holes that should be there to load bullets into? Capped?

I’m not a gun maniac so I’ve never seen a real gun in person, so I wouldn’t be able tell if it’s real or not if someone told me there was a gun like that.

“So, would you explain to me what caused you to send so much bloodthirst to your employer?”

“... You’ll go bald if you fuss on the details—sorry Kuroinu-senpai please stop it with the knife on my neck sorry Village Chief-san sorry for what I said sorry!”

Yep, Meat closed the distance in an instant and held the knife up against her throat. As for her standing on the table to do it... well, let’s go with it being fine for this. Nayuta’s holding up her arms like she’s in a holdup. She even dropped her gun to the floor.

“Ah, yep. I’m not going bald, I’m still young. Well, it’s all good... Kuro, let her go. How about I read the letter from that daimyo person now?”

I opened the letter.

... A part of it is weird in that I can read it normally, but hey, isn’t it written in Japanese? Sure, Japanese characters flash in my head as I read this world’s writing, but I can only see this as Japanese. Honestly though, if I had to say, the handwriting looks great.

Are they trying to see my reaction, or is there another reason? ... I don’t know.

By the way, this is what the letter says:

Dear Golen Village’s Village Chief-sama,

How is this vividly green season treating you? If you don't mind, would you pay a visit to Wakoku? I'm certain that Nayuta must have done something rude, but as it was due to my instruction, she had no choice. If you are Japanese, I would absolutely love to speak with you. If the time comes that you would pay a visit, we would shoulder all of the traveling expenses for you to do so. We have sashimi, soy sauce, and miso soup.

... A Japanese person? Really. Really now.

This is a seriously troublesome person. Super troublesome.

Alright, I decided. I saw nothing!

For the time being, I can't read it.

After turning the letter upside down, narrowing my eyes, flipping it over and scowling at it, I held it out to pass to Meat.

"Hmph, Kuro. Can you read it?"

"Oh? Village Chief-san, you can't read the characters?"

"... I'm not too good at reading and writing. So, how about it, Kuro? Can you?"

"Umm, Goshujin-sama. This letter appears to be written in unreadable characters."

As a result of her education, Meat's able to read the letters commonly used in this world. In other worlds, this is probably written in Japanese after all. Wakoku has a lot of mysteries to it.

Come to think of it, didn't Wataru end up heading over to Wakoku? Let's ask him about it next time he's here.

"That so? Well, if those characters aren't from around it, it's natural I couldn't read it either then."

I tried to appeal that my inability to read it wasn't because I was stupid... was I a bit too forceful about it there?

"So, what's it say? You can read it, right Nayuta?"

"Yeah... Hmm, it's about scouting you out after all. It's talking about the conditions for being employed, it even looks like the annual salary's a thousand gold! That's as much as an A-Rank adventurer."

I doesn't say anything about a thousand gold income anywhere though?

Guess they worked that out beforehand.

Oh right. I saw nothing. I read nothing.

“Unfortunately, I’m this village’s Village Chief, so I have responsibilities. I’ll have to refuse... I’m not troubled by money either though, and most of all it stinks of something shady.”

“That’s too bad, I thought it’d be fun if you were a coworker. Ah, Kuro-senpai got an invitation too?”

“If Goshujin-sama refuses, so do I.”

“Yeah, I get it. Well, I’ll write back saying you refused then.”

Her hand waving, Nayuta responded as though it were trivial.

Looks like decided that I saw nothing was the right answer. Booyah.

“Incidentally, could you give me a closer look at that item? You said you got it from the dungeon, but this is the first time I’ve seen it. I’d like to check it out as the Village Chief, even buy it if I could.”

I touched on the subject of that gun.

When I said ‘buy it’, Nayuta’s tail sprung up.

“Ah~, sorry. To be honest, this is something I made myself. Me getting it from the dungeon was a lie.”

“Heeh, handmade? It looks like a weapon, is it a magic tool?”

“... As you guessed, it’s a magic tool weapon. It’s something I tried reproducing from the world of the Heroes. Its strength, currently... well, it’s basically a kid’s plaything.”

Saying that, she shot the gun towards the wall. With a sound that felt lacking, something lightly struck the wall with a sound that sounded much like as if a small pebble hit it.

... When I looked at it, the conical bullet looked like a dart. Bullets weren’t this shape right? They should be more aerodynamic. Moreover, judging by the feeling of this, it’s iron, not lead. Heeeh.

“The real thing seems to be something that fires bullets through an explosion though. It didn’t shoot like I’d planned when I tried making it as a magic tool, so it’s not even strong enough to stick to wood doors. It’d be bad if it got you in the eye though... Honestly, it’d be stronger to just throw the bullet. Haah... I

wonder if I should come at it from some other way?"

It's apparently something that came about through Nayuta's own trial and error.

Looks like she wasn't told much about guns and gunpowder. The looks of it surprised me though.

"... You're reproducing magic tools from the heroes' world? Well, if it's something that originally has enough power to be a weapon, I'm sure their world has developed their understanding of magic considerably."

"Huh? It's the opposite. Their world doesn't have magic at all."

"Really now? Then how are you having it explode?"

"The materials don't exist. It's just reproducing the looks... uumu, I've been wanting to talk to a Hero about it, Village Chief-san, do you know a Hero?"

"Ah, yeah. I do."

When I said that, Nayuta shot forward, leaning over the table.

"... Um, could you introduce me? I'll pay for the referral fee!"

"I'll introduce you to him the next time he's here."

It's about time Hero Wataru will be heading over to make a payment on his debt.

Apparently, Haku-san forced him to take an absurd job that lasted the entire duration of the Dungeon Battle. Incidentally, I had him pay the payment he'd miss by not being able to come here in advance.

She'd meet him at reception or while waiting on tables either way, so it's not like I'll be asking her for a referral fee though.

Chapter 207 - Magic Tools Shopping

The weather that day was great.

Nayuta and Setsuna had a request for Rokuko and I, so we met with them. I was using [Super Transformation] while we met with them just in case. It's pretty cowardly even for me, but oh well. My life's important. I couldn't sleep anymore if I'm dead. I don't accept death as sleep.

Rokuko was defenseless, so I'll be a meatshield in case of an emergency. I basically have an extra life due to [Super Transformation] after all.

"Rokuko-sama, Village Chief-san. Today's our day off... but could we sell stuff to adventurers in the dining room!?"

Setsuna spoke with a rather energetic voice. It's not her work hours right now, so she's in her gym outfit.

"Sure? I don't really mind, Kehma?"

"Wait wait Rokuko. Let's see what you want to sell first. What is it?"

"It's stuff that Nayuta made through alchemy. We were thinking about what we could use for the Hero's information fees, so we wanted to earn some change."

Nayuta's alchemy, huh? In this world, alchemy means using tools to carve magic formations and making magic tools. Selling magic tools directly is rather lucrative.

"Could I buy that gun from earlier for a gold coin?"

"Nn? Huh? What should I do Nayuta, sell it?"

"That bang banger eh... hmm, I don't really want to sell an unfinished product though."

"Wouldn't it be alright if it was as a toy?"

"... Let me think about it please. I'll sell it if we don't sell much this time."

Honestly, it'd just be a toy even if I bought it, so it's perfect. Besides, me offering a gold coin for it's nothing but indulging in something interesting. It might even give me something good and it's not like I'm lacking in money either.

"More importantly what are you selling specifically? Show me, show me."

"Various things, Owner. Take this for example, a Smoke Ball. Smoke billows out of it when it is struck against the ground, producing a smokescreen. It is quite cheap at just one silver!"

Oh, a disposable smokescreen for 10,000 Yen? It looks pretty small, around the size of a ping pong ball.

Rather, why are you speaking to her so civilly, Nayuta? Eh, is it that? The polite language given only to your employer? Do you not recognize me as your employer?

"Isn't a silver coin for a disposable item a bit expensive?"

"... Umm, the conditions needed for combining things into this for the smokescreen are pretty strict. To the point that it'd be good if Onee-chan successfully makes one out of ten tries. The wind magic formation that causes the smokescreen is hard. But it's really useful for when you need to escape from an enemy. Buying your life for a single silver is cheap right?"

Well, buying your life for a single silver is pretty cheap, yeah.

"So, does it work against Golems?"

"Yep. There's bone dust with magical power in it mixed into the Smoke Balls in order to deal with monsters that can perceive things through magic, like Golems. There's a deodorizing effect to deal with smells as well, so it's usable in most cases."

So it's like chaff? It really is useful, seeing as it can be used in so many situations.

"There is also this Water Ball. Well, it is similar to a jug magic tool in that it can replenish your water. Water comes out from the hole when you press this button. You could put it in a cup or drink it directly."

"Hey, have you figured out a price for this one?"

"Yes... it is a striking five silver coins!"

By the way, a jug magic tool is around three silver. And she's back to speaking politely for Rokuko yet again.

"That's pretty expensive."

"It's because making so small is hard. But it being this small makes it convenient

since it won't keep you from bringing other luggage. We have a flask-type as well, but it's four silver."

It's also about the size of a ping pong ball. I guess it is pretty small comparatively? The flask-type would also be convenient given a suitable situation.

"There is also this Fire Ball, meant for offensive uses. It will turn into a ball of fire three seconds after pressing the button. This one is one silver for three. It is a magical fire, so it is effective against ghost-types as well."

A timed ignition device... that seriously is convenient. It could even be a trump card for warriors that can't use magic.

It'd be meaningless for me since I can use magic, but maybe I should give buying it a shot?

"There is also this Quiver Ball, it can be used to give massages. When you press this button here, you can place it against your shoulders. It feels quite refreshing. I was inspired by the massage chair here and made it."

"Heeh, its pink color is so cute!"

"I am greatly happy that it pleases you, Owner. Ah, this one is three silver coins."

This one's also ping pong ball sized. Rather, why's everything ping pong ball size?

When I started thinking about that, Nayuta grinned.

"Huhuhu, did you notice? This is the concept of having a standard, improving its usability through keeping the sizes equal. You can attach five of your preferred balls onto this Ball Holder—sold separately! Their different colors make them easily distinguishable. I'll throw in a free holder if you buy ten balls now!"

"Hoooh. You've thought a bit about this."

It's just like those mail-order sales commercials.

"There's even more too! This Sand Ball can produce white and black sand. It is good for taking notes on the floor when you need to puzzle your way through a riddle. This Breath Ball can be used for breathing underwater. You could even use it in places where the air is thin, like mountains. In addition to those, there's

this Sweet Ball. It tastes sweet when you lick it. However, as it isn't as though it will fill your stomach, it is only at most recommended to use it by supplementing your emergency food rations. Or perhaps you have a sweet tooth and don't want to grow fat? These are my works of art!"

With that, she took out various balls of different colors. They were interesting, so I decided to buy one of each. I'm earning enough to make this kind of shopping possible, I even got two holders as a bonus.

"Well, they look like they'll sell well. That Sweet Ball in particular. It'd be amusing if it had other tastes in it as well though."

"This one's an original I came across while researching magic formations after all. When Onee-chan was licking the plate I'd carved a magic formation into, I thought she'd finally gone crazy..."

"Hey! You owe your super find to me!"

"In truth, this one is the best seller. Thanks, Onee-chan."

When I tried licking it, it was faint, but it certainly was sweet.

Seeing as how this world puts a huge price on sweetness, I'm convinced that this sells well.

"Kehma, let me try it."

"Yeah, here."

I tossed the Sweet Ball I licked over to her... Ah, Rokuko turned red. Right. So this is the 'indirect kiss' huh.

"Alright, hand it back here for a moment."

"I refuse! It's mine!"

"But I'm the one that bought it..."

"You bought it with the inn's money, so it's mine."

So that's what she's going with... Well, she looks happy for some reason, so I guess it's fine?

"Huhuhu, Owner really is on good terms with Village Chief-san. So, Owner, I'd like to show you something to you alone..."

"Hoh... let's do it!"

"Oi, don't go alone."

"It's alright, we can trust Nayuta. It's okay if you leave!"

And now Rokuko's 100% ensnared. How the heck...

"But right now I'm also acting as Rokuko's guard. I can't leave Rokuko defenseless."

"It'd be nice if we could say that our employer can trust us... Right now, we're also adventurers that are employed by Owner. It'll be alright since we're there, right?"

"Employees and guards are different roles."

"Huhun, I understand that you're worried about your partner, but his it women's talk for women. Could you not show restraint? Well, in this case is..."

"T-that's...! Un, Kehma, it's alright. If you have to, call for Ichika okay?"

"... Oh well then."

I called for Ichika and had her be Rokuko's guard.

"... Ichika, don't be cajoled by them alright?"

"Goshujin-sama. Aren't ya worryin' too much?"

"It's an order."

Additionally, it looks like the magic tools Nayuta sold did pretty well.

... But what was that thing they sold to Rokuko only? She bought whatever it was in the end.

It was three gold coins.

"Goshujin-sama. Make sure ya tell Rokuko-sama she's gotten prettier 'kay?"

Ah, it was a beauty product. Yep, got it.

Chapter 208 - Introductions

The Debt Hero Wataru arrived.
As promised, I decided to introduce Nayuta to Wataru. I set it up with a casual setting. There weren't any problems.

"P-pleased to meet you! M-my name's Nayuta!"

"I'm Setsuna~"

"Nice to meet you both, I'm Wataru Nishimi. The empire's Hero."

With that, Nayuta and Setsuna were sitting in front of Wataru at a table for four in the dining room. It wasn't meal time, so there weren't any other guests there.

"Let's see, I heard a bit about you two from Kehma-san, but you two are from Wakoku, right?"

"Y-yes. T-that's why, I want to ask Wataru-san, a hero, so many things! Umm, w-we'll pay for the information, so—"

"It's alright, don't worry about it. Instead, I'd like to ask you a few things about Wakoku back."

And I'll be getting information by attending them in the last seat. Information GET... Well, it's not like I have to be here either way. I'm just here in the off chance the topic turns to me and they notice something. That'd be serious.

"Wakoku has cherry blossoms, right?"

"Yes, it does. There are trees that bloom with pink flowers in the spring."

"Ah, so they bloom in the spring after all. Then maybe it'd be better to go in the spring... well, I don't have enough leisure to put off my work like that until my debt's paid off."

"Debt?"

"Yeah, around two thousand gold coins... I'm paying it back in payments, yeah..."

"By the way, we'd shoulder the loan if you became Wakoku's Hero..."

"I'm indebted to Haku-san... even now, she's introducing me to so much work that earns me praises."

“It’s true that Heroes possess such a strong sense of duty...”

Nayuta sighed. I don’t think Setsuna understood too well, but she was smiling.

“Hey hey, wanna have a mock fight later? I’m suuuper interested in strong people.”

“Haha, later sure. By the way, what else is there in Wakoku?”

“Umm, there’s miso and soy sauce.”

“It was a bit scary eating raw fish, but that sashimi was really good.”

“Ooh... As expected of Wakoku. Is there sake too?”

“There isn’t any ginjo, but there’s shochuu. It can’t be called Japanese sake since it doesn’t use rice, but it could be called Wakoku sake... ah, but I heard that rice was discovered recently. That’s why we came to the Raverio Empire, to investigate it. From the looks of it, growing it is easy enough, there just needs to be the rice itself to grow.”

“Eh? There wasn’t any rice in Wakoku?”

Ah, crap. Come to think of it, I said there was, didn’t I...

“Hey, wasn’t there something more important you wanted to ask the Hero—”

“From what we heard, our employer’s only gotten a hold of a very small amount of what was discovered in the Raverio Empire. Unfortunately, the Mikado was only presented a preprocessed version—ah, the Mikado is the most important person in Wakoku, a descendants of the Hero that founded Wakoku.”

I tried to interrupt casually but failed. Nayuta isn’t paying any attention to me at all, oi.

“Mikado... I see, Mikado (Emperor), huh. So Wakoku was a country established by a Japanese... so that’s why its name is Wakoku...”

“And when the Mikado was shown the rice, it was unmistakably the real thing. Reproducing Japan is Wakoku’s number one goal. An edict to investigate the area that produced it and obtain seeds came out. Ah, that’s a state secret.”

“Haah, I get it. So, for that rice... ah, is it alright for me to ask about it?”

“It’s supposed to be kept a secret... but we’re currently seeking even a trickle of information about it, so spreading it’s alright.”

You sure about doing that with a national secret?

I wanted to tilt my head.

“Then about that rice—”

“Hey, Wataru. Wouldn’t that former hero that was able to build a country be a clue for your goal of returning to Japan?”

I promptly interrupted. By the way, there hasn’t been any rice appearing in the set meals recently, not even for the A set meal. We still have a lot of the wheat we bought to last through the winter, so we’ve been using that. Thanks to that, it looks like Nayuta didn’t realize that this inn used to have rice. She would’ve asked about it if she knew.

“Eh? Ah, Kehma-san didn’t know? Hero summoning crosses through time. The Food God, Hero Ishidaka-san, was a person from about the same time period as me judging by the cuisine he popularized, so the flow of time here’s different.”

Eh, really? Feels like I’m just now hearing about something really important.

“Rice is more important than that though, Kehma-san! It looks like there’s no rice in Wakoku!? Hey Kehma-san, I need to talk to you about—”

“Alright, hold up. Sorry, but I need to borrow Wataru for a moment. C’mon.”

“Eh, w-what’s wrong, Kehma-san?”

I got out of my seat and pulled on Wataru. I’ll pretend I didn’t see Nayuta glare at me like I got in her way.

“Keep quiet about you and I being the ones to bring rice to the empire, alright?”

“Eh, but... don’t the people of Wakoku really want rice? Let’s share.”

“Stupid, that’s exactly why. That’s why we can sell it for more. Supply and demand, it’s the common sense for a merchant. I’ll add to your debt if I get a loss due to your careless remarks. Be prepared to pay a hundred gold a month until you die if you say anything... yeah?”

“Uuu, the heck man... why’s my weakness (money) being seized even though I’m a Hero... but then, Kehma-san, where did you get the rice?”

“You think I’d tell you with that loose mouth of yours? Hmm?”

“Yeah, I understand. I’ll keep quiet.”

I returned to my seat after finishing my talk with Wataru. Sitting here with him was the right choice after all.

“... Even if you’re looking for rice, I can’t help at all. Maaan, sorry about that.”

“Village Chief-san? Just what did you...”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. Now, didn’t you have something you wanted to ask the Hero? Go ahead and ask.”

“Ummm, well, excuse my courtesy, but please take a look at this.”

With a clank, Nayuta put her handmade revolver on the table. I guess she didn’t want to seem threatening like how it was against me since she knew he was a Japanese?

“Nn? It looks like a gun... but what is this?”

“I’m trying to reproduce a weapon from the world of heroes. I’d like to get your opinion on it.”

“... I see, so you’re trying to reproduce guns. What for?”

“My hobby!”

“Your hobby...”

Her hobby was a troublesome answer.

So I decided to interrupt.

“By the way, Wataru. Concerning the gun, it appears that the only information written about them is their appearance and that they propel bullets through explosions. It seems that the means of the explosion itself isn’t understood... I wonder why the Hero from that time decided to leave out the rest of the data?”

“... Ah—right, he was concerned about the existence of guns destroying the culture, so he only left information about how to defend against them without being able to make them...! Kuh, then considering that, I... can’t say anything further concerning guns! Sorry, Nayuta-san...”

“Ah, no, umm... yeah, oi, Village Chief-san? Could you please leave if you’re just going to get in the way?”

This blonde dog eared girl just called me a hindrance.

“I’m doing the introducing, what would you do if I weren’t here?”

“I’d be getting information from him now wouldn’t I!?”

“Wataru, could you use the backyard to have that mock fight with Setsuna?”

“Hero-san, let’s fight! Fight!”

When I brought up the matter of having that mock fight against Wataru as I ignored Nayuta, Setsuna took the bait as planned.

"Y-yeah. It's fine with me. I mean, I wasn't able to give much helpful information after all."

Wataru answered while looking at Setsuna's swaying breasts.
But that girl, she doesn't just have a top part. She has a bottom thing too.
I didn't say it though.

"... You look like you're enjoying yourself, huh~?"

Nerune violently put her wooden cup down on the table. A little of the water in it spilled onto the table... come to think of it, today was Nerune's waitress shift, wasn't it?

"Eh, ah, no! You're wrong, Nerune-san!"

"Wrong about what~? Fufufu~, you don't need to worry about me though~?"

"Are you mad? You're mad at me aren't you!"

"Hero-sama~, do you like them big~?"

"No, that's not it—"

... Huh? Nerune's reacting like she's jealous over something. When did you guys get into that kind of a relationship?

Nerune diverted her eyes for a moment. Following her gaze, Rei was over there with her thumb up in the air with a triumphant look.

So that was it? Her slamming the cup on the table a second ago was at Rei's suggestion. A performance.

"Oi, Wataru. Even though you confessed to Rokuko, now you're making a move on our young miss? That's some nerve you have there, oi."

"Eh, no, I was just a bit excited by our magic discussion, I'm not guilty of anything yet—"

"... Yet? Then you were planning on doing something in the future...? Guest-saaan? That's troubling, we aren't that kind of inn though?"

"T-t-t-t-that's not what I meant! I've just been talking about magic with Nerune-san—!"

"Yeah, it's nothing~. I'm only interested in the magic Hero-sama knows~. No more, no less~"

Ah, Nerune's true intentions. I can vaguely see them as the Dungeon Master, but that's her honest intentions. This girl is seriously only interested in magic. She's not a monster called Apprentice Witch for nothing.

And so after various things, it was decided that he would bring her some magic scrolls next time as a present.

Well done.

I held my thumb up towards Rei in praise.

Chapter 209 - Wataru's Side of Things

The mock fight ended in Wataru's complete victory.

"Well, if you can get me out of this circle, it'll be your win. If you win, I'll tell you something good in secret behind Kehma-san's back."

"Oi, Wataru?"

"Ahaha, it's alright. I won't lose."

Having five matches, as he said, he never stepped out of the ring of approximately one meter in radius.

In the first match, Setsuna got hit head-on and rolled backwards on the ground.

In the second match, she was thrown high into the sky and got caught in a princess carry.

In the third match, without even a slight movement, she was tripped up and was sent rolling away.

In the fourth match, he easily avoided Setsuna's fierce assault in the circle and placed his sword against her neck at some point.

In the fifth match, he suddenly seized Setsuna's head with his arm... unable to move, she surrendered.

It looks like the Hero got that strong in the four years of serious training he did. And he's still improving.

... I wondered if he might be a good reference for the golems, but there's no way. Their levels are just way too different.

"Ah, would Kehma-san like to have a mock fight as well?"

"Haha, do you even think I could win?"

"You've gotten strong right? I can tell. How should I say this... you have a 'something' trying to hide about you!"

The heck do you mean 'something'? At least say something with a feeling like atmosphere or aura.

In truth, I have [Super Transformation Lv3] on me so I probably have gotten stronger as a hero, but as expected of Wataru to see through that. Ah, it might

also be because of the clothes golem's enhancement.

"Nkyuu! I want to see Village Chief-san and Hero-sama fight!"

"Right, I'd like to see Village Chief-san get kicked a few times."

"See? Setsuna-san and Nayuta-san said so too. We can even go with the same rules."

"... Alright, then could I use a weapon?"

"Sure, go for it."

And so I went to prepare my weapon.

I brought my futon. Laying out a cloth, I placed my futon on top of it.

"Um. Your weapon?"

"Alright then, let's start this mock fight, shall we?"

"Eh, the heck are you doing!? Hey!"

"Don't worry. Well, good night then."

"Eh—"

I crawled into my futon... Yep, this mock fight has a fatal loophole. There's no defeat conditions for me at all.

In other words, I can go to sleep right next to Wataru, ignore him and even go back home. So long as I don't acknowledge my defeat, it's not my defeat.

"It's alright. Feel free to let me know whenever you can't take it anymore and need to use the bathroom. But it'll be your loss the moment you take a step out of that circle. You know what? I'm good to keep this mock battle going till you starve."

"It's not a mock fight at this point! Aaah mou, I get it, rule change!"

"Nn? What're you saying. The rules will stay. Why're you trying to change them on your own? You accepting your loss?"

"... It's my loss! Kehma-san's mean!"

With that, I won the mock battle against Wataru.

But even though he admitted defeat, Wataru was laughing. Did he hit his funny bone or something?

"Village Chief-san, I don't think that's what you should've done."

"... My opinion of you has raised a little."

Setsuna was obviously unsatisfied by it since she was expecting an intense fight, but it got surprisingly good results from Nayuta. I was probably raised from being scrap, though.

“There’s no way I’d win against you if we went head on. I’d be a joke.”

“It really looked like you just intended on sleeping.”

“Me laying out my futon right in front of him was to get him to give up quickly. If I did it seriously, I would’ve went back to sleep and wait for you to leave the circle.”

“I see... so then could you start over and do the mock fight normally?”

“Don’t wanna.”

I’m a mage in the first place. I’m not recognized much as one since I don’t use magic in front of people though. I don’t even go out in public much after all.

“Then how about you attack with magic? I won’t attack back. If you can put me out of the ring in a minute, it’ll be your win. How about it?”

“Refused. I’ll be taking my win and leaving.”

Wataru persistently tried to change the rules, by magic is a mage’s trump card. It’s not like I’d easily expose my hand to adventurers who aren’t even my party members.

And even if I used [Create Golem] to flip him over like I did with Misha, Wataru could just take advantage of the rules that allowed him to move within the circle and trample the golem. Rather, this Hero... can he fly?

“Eh? Aren’t we bonding? I want us to get closer, that’s why I’m reducing my debt.”

“Then how about I double the debt amount as interest? Maybe I will. I mean, that way, our relationship will double.”

“Sorry, please spare me from that...”

Wataru bowed spontaneously.

It was mostly a joke to start with, so let’s forgive him.

Seeing us talk to each other like that, Nayuta was frowning like she’d eaten something bitter.

“... Even though Heroes are existences that should inspire fear and awe... no, maybe this Hero-sama is a special case...? Or perhaps Village Chief-san is.. un,

Village Chief-san is suspicious. Setting everything else aside, Village Chief-san is beyond suspicious.

“Hey, that’s not something you should say right in front of someone.”

“It’s alright. I’m saying it so that you’ll hear it.”

Tentatively, I’m the most famous person in the village. The village chief.

“You’re a figurehead, right? I know Rokuko-sama’s background. As well as how Village Sub-Chief Wozuma-san handles everything himself.”

Rokuko’s background... as a Dungeon Core? No, it’s gotta be about her being the empire’s head’s (Haku-san’s) little sister.

So Rokuko is the most famous person in the village. I see.

I’d heard that beastkin were fussy about pecking order, but it’s like that? I’m at a pretty low spot in Nayuta’s mind? So that’s why she’s been talking to me with that sort of attitude.

She reported that I was strong to the point of being a good match against Setsuna, so although I should’ve been—what was it, [Promising]? Well, although I should be that, what kind of evaluation criteria did Nayuta have for me to be so low in her books? Maybe it’s more about ingenuity than battle prowess?

Maybe it’s because it looks like I just sleep everyday and eat delicious food without doing anything? I even recently refused Gozoh’s invitation for preparing for an emergency after all. I was sleeping though.

Well, I decided to leave Nayuta alone and ask Wataru something.

“By the way, Wataru. Why Nerune? You could get anyone you want as a Hero.”

“... That’s just it. I’m a Hero. Women either draw close to me because of my title or stay away like I’m some monster. Then it turns into stuff like marriage fraud by some country’s spy...”

Wataru had a distant look to him. Heroes have it pretty tough, huh.

As he said the word ‘spy’, Setsuna’s tail twitched. Anyone other than me would’ve missed it.

And with her having Wakoku’s confidential information... so it’s like that? Looks like her identity suddenly offered itself up on a silver platter.

... Hmm? But thinking about it more, didn’t she practically say she was a spy?

She even said that her employer was Wakoku's Daimyo. Is it alright for her to actually say that?

"On that point, this inn is nice! I'm not treated any differently and it's comfortable like when I was in Japan! Kehma-san even looks Japanese-ish, so I practically want to just live here."

"What, you're an M?"

"I'm not! But you, Rokuko-sama and Nerune-san all just talk to me, not caring about my title..."

"Y-yeah."

Seeing his lonely expression, it's pretty hard for me to say anything in response.

This guy... so he had a lonely attribute to him? Maybe I should go a bit easier on him...

"Also, Kehma-san's the first person to beat me in a mock fight since I debuted as a hero!"

"Oi cut it out. Don't go off saying that I beat a Hero or anything."

"I knew you'd find it troublesome, Kehma-san, that's just like you. I won't say anything. Ah, but in exchange, about my debt..."

"I won't be reducing it at all. That's the compensation for wagering Kuro."

"I understand. I will pay it off with everything I have."

Right then, he bowed and gave a true apology.

It might be a bit late to think about it, but he even sent his dignity as a Hero to the wind, huh.

... Or did he not have it from the start?

Chapter 210 - Rice

Wataru wanted to somehow give Nayuta and Setsuna some rice, so I decided to cooperate just a bit.

“Oi Wataru, a little help here?”

“Ah, coming.”

I had Wataru bring a bag filled with husked rice out from the warehouse into the kitchen.

And then Kinue-san turned them into rice balls.

Then, I—

“We made rice balls out of some rice Wataru brought, want to eat them? We’ll just treat it as part of your free meals, so go ahead.”

With that, I gave them to Nayuta and Setsuna.

They looked like something surprised them, but I didn’t lie.

Wataru was also surprised by seeing them. Why?

“Wow, this is the legendary rice that everyone in Wakoku has only ever heard in legends. The ultimate item, onigiri...!”

“Is it alright for us to eat them...? They would sell for a high price if we brought them back to Wakoku.”

No, they’ll go bad on the way there... ah, maybe they have [Storage]?

“Om, nom... un, it’s delicious, but it’s not that good. Maybe genuine Waokuans would have a different impression of it? I’d expect nothing less of something that has been passed down by Hero-samas...”

“If you want, why not buy a bag of rice? A hundred gold should be enough.”

“... How much is ‘a bag’?”

“This much.”

I held up the bag.

A single bag is ten kilograms. I tried out asking for a hundred gold (equivalent to around a hundred million yen), but will they buy it?

“A hundred gold coins... that’s expensive for a single bag...”

"Hero-sama, by the way, how much are these wholesale?"

"U-umm... one bag is ten gold coins."

Asked for the wholesale price, Wataru answered with the price he pays. Incidentally, this guy's buying a bag of this every month despite having a debt. He seems to be halving it with Haku-san though.

"Such a markup."

"Oi oi, the number of people that can buy this is limited, you know? Also, resale isn't allowed. Wanting to sell it out of the country is a ridiculous thought. You can't miss this chance to get it yeah?"

"... Twenty gold."

"Out of the question. A hundred and ten."

"It went up!?"

"It goes up with my mood, didn't you know that? I gotta make a profit."

There's no other suppliers, so I can be as bullish as I need in negotiating. To say it another way, I don't really mind not selling it. It's not like it'll rot and it's not taking up storage space. DP is super convenient.

"Well, it's not like I have to sell it. Well, guess you don't want it."

"W-wait! ... Th-thirty gold!"

Nayuta called out when I started putting away the bag of rice. However, I still haven't raised the price enough.

"... I'll assume this talk never happened."

"Forty coins, t-that's my maximum... could I talk to my boss? ... Immediate cash is impossible."

"Well, sure. I'll give you it ahead of time. I'll set the preferred price as forty gold coins as a minimum... The talk will go faster with the actual thing yeah? I'll send them a bag a month from now on according to how much they pay alright? Tell them to think over it carefully."

With that, I handed the bag of rice to Nayuta... it was heavy, so Setsuna picked it up.

"Don't you think that we'll run away with it?"

"It's alright. I'll just add a hundred gold coins to Wataru's debt if that happens. Sound good, Wataru?"

"H-hey, Kehma-san, could you come here for a sec?"

Wataru called me over, so I followed him.

"Why're you wanting to increase my debt!?"

"The whole thing about giving rice to Wakoku was brought up by you after all. Go ahead and be the guarantor as well. Ah, if you don't want to, I don't mind not giving them even a single grain of rice. That way's easier for me."

Moreover, there's no problem even if they escape.

"... Understood. I can get a hundred gold in a month... they definitely won't run away though!"

How very Hero-like of him, being able to get a hundred gold in a month.

"Why do you trust those two so much even though you just met them for the first time today?"

"Well, it's cheap considering the fee for information about Wakoku. If everything works out, it'll have been free. I don't know if they're genuine or not, but they did show me their passports and identification."

I see, so he thought about that too?

By the way, their passports were lacquered black with Wakoku's golden crest on it. It's relatively extravagant.

With that, our discussion ended so we headed back.

"I'll be adding a hundred gold coins to Wataru's debt if you run away. Make sure to pay if you do not want to lose the Hero's faith in you."

"Definitely! Please Nayuta-san, make sure not to run away with it, alright?"

"Ah, un... understood. I can't betray Hero-sama's faith."

Incidentally, one bag of rice is 50 DP. I've gotten used to overcharging recently, haven't I?

"Well, if you're able to find a direct route rather than procuring it the empire, you can end the deal right then."

"How gracious. Hmph, we'll find it right away. There has to be a route that they use to get it in the first place."

Be that as it may, it's coming from right here.

If you're able to find somewhere other than here, I'd love to hear where it is.

*

Done with introducing the three of them, I went back to my room as the village chief.

Wataru won't go off blabbing his mouth after I said that much stuff to him, and more importantly, Nerune's monitoring him.

"And now we have another source of easy money."

"You're so good at making money, Kehma. Reliable!"

And for some reason, Rokuko dropped by. The timing was so good that it felt like she was watching me through the monitor the whole time, but I didn't say anything in particular about it.

"But still, those sisters, they were Wakoku spies?"

"They weren't exactly trying to hide it, so maybe they're ninjas."

"Ninja? Is that the name of some secret service?"

"Well, that's a possibility too. It's the name of an occupation associated with the Mikado and Daimyo of Japan."

I just gave her a simple explanation of it for now. I said that they were shadows specializing in intelligence gathering and craftiness.

"... Ninjas! Shuriken, caltrops, smoke bombs... ninjutsu!"

"By the way, there's shinobi too. They're much more pragmatic."

"Ah, that's okay."

What's okay?

"Haah, but that's a bit refreshing. Those sisters are actually ninjas... that aside, they're Wakoku's spies. In that case, we don't need to fire them then!"

"... Well, handling them will be easy enough if they're gathering information that openly and we can even exchange rice with them. But there's still an important point remaining."

"... The hermaphrodism?"

"It's not a problem if she was just born with that body. Rather why'd you say that? There's something more important."

"Well, Kehma's been watching them for a while now, so I was wondering if you

had a preference for it or something. I wouldn't lose in terms of boobs, but I don't have anything down here... would it be better if I grew one too?"

"You absolutely shouldn't."

"It's not like I could even if you wanted me to, it's not like I'm Kehma."

"Like I could do something like that.... ah, I do have [Super Transformation] huh. Yep."

There's a restriction that the thing I want has to exist though. Ah, we went off topic.

"So what's the important thing?"

"DP, her DP. The elder sister's daily DP is 0, remember?"

"Ah, that was a thing, huh!"

Right. The mystery of why Setsuna's daily DP was 0 still remained.

... And yet Rokuko forgot such an important matter. Maybe it's a reaction from her doing her best recently? That's relieving.

Chapter 211 - Teach Me Ontentoo-senpai

I can't investigate anymore on my own.
It's not exactly like I could ask Setsuna why she's not worth any DP either.
So what should I do?

"Haah, so someone like that came eh?"
"Yeah. You don't find it strange, Ontentoo?"

Answer: Ask a guide.

That's why I decided to ask the Stupimander (Stupid Salamander), Ontentoo. It'd be easy to pay him back even if I owed him a favor. Neighbors are supposed to help each other out. It feels like it's been a one-sided relationship so far though.

"There's nothin' strange about it. Kehma, you're 0 DP too yeah?"
"No no, this person's an adventurer you know?"
"Haaah? Kehma, you're a human adventurer too aren't ye?"
"I'm a Dungeon Master, it's different."
"Then isn't that girl a Dungeon Master too?"

Hmm, that's a good idea.

There's a possibility that's the case, but there's other things I want to check first.

"Have you ever seen someone other than a Dungeon Master or a Dungeon Core being worth 0 DP? I thought you might know something since you've been doing this for a while."

"Ah.. sorry, this is the first time I've seen this daily DP thing. Between you and me, most of our stuff comes from Tsuia Mountain's Earth Vein. I don't care much about intruder DP. I can tell about how strong they are though."

Woah. Me knowing more than Ontentoo was outside of my expectations.

"Well, there's a good chance that girl's someone related to a dungeon. That said, there shouldn't be some dog rabbit beastkin mix in the Dungeon Cores, maybe it's she's a Master...? Ah."

Ontentoo stopped like he just remembered something and scratched his face with his foreleg.

"What? Don't worry, just say it."

"Nah, it's just something 5-sama said a while back. Ye know about Core 4?"

"I saw Core 5 and Core 6 the other day, but I haven't seen Core 4."

"The heck've ye been doing? Ah, right. 695 got into some dispute. We even got some family name... did ye win?"

So that got conveyed to the Dungeon Cores that were unrelated to the Dungeon Battle as well, huh...? I took a second thinking about how to answer him, but decided to just say it since it's not like I really need to hide it.

"Yeah, we won."

"Kukuku, that so? As expected of someone who beat me. Setting aside the brats under 5-sama's command, ye even beat Core 6 and 666 eh? Good, good."

Ontentoo's lizard face warped into a smile.

So Ontentoo calls the trivial trio brats?

"By the way, the family name was my suggestion."

"Ye did eh? With that, it makes my name Ontentoo Labriheart? Cool yeah?"

His fire-clad lizard tail struck the ground in what looked like delight.

... Sorry, I should've thought up a better last name. Right now it's just giving off a 'lovely' feeling when added to Ontentoo.

"More importantly, what's this about Core 4?"

"Ah, Core 4 is... well, that guy's called 'Chaos'."

"Chaos... why's that?"

"Who knows? However, doesn't being a mix breed match chaos?"

"Ontentoo, have you seen Core 4?"

"No... never have. That one doesn't go to the Dungeon Core Assembly... at least not since I've been born and that's been what, four, five hundred years?"

Ontentoo, you're so unsure of your age that you don't even remember if you're in your four hundreds or five hundreds? The Salamander's paired up with a Dragon, so maybe his sense of time's already gone fuzzy?

"Core 4's rank is low for one with a single digit, rather, it's beyond low

considering the other single digits. Brats'll ask about him when they pop up but no one pays much attention him at this point, same with me."

"I see. By the way, do you happen to know what a thing called a 'Toy' is?"

"Toy? No clue."

This guy's useless. Well, setting that aside, I beckoned Ontentoo over. Ontentoo bent forward and brought his ear—well, the part of his head he hear's from—and leaned over the table.

I didn't really need to do it like this since we're the only two in the room, but it sets up the mood just right.

"... Would you like to help me with a bit of an experiment?"

"Sounds interesting? I don't mind, but ye've gotta share the results yeah?"

"Obviously. You're a big help, Neighbor-san."

"If you're lying, I'll have you—eh, what's the thing for times like that—eat a thousand needles?"

"The punishment that was introduced by God's Vanguards was [Eat A Thousand Needles]. It might be different for Salamanders and Dragons since you guys can eat swords and iron, but normal humans would just die. In other words, it means they're putting their life on the line."

"Seriously? Humans are hardcore."

"But there's a loophole for that punishment. For example, there's a fish called 'porcupinefish' that—"

While having a brief chat about God's Vanguards and deepening our relationship, we performed an experiment. I don't want to bite into a porcupinefish either and it's not like I want to hide the results, so I'll just tell them to him.

As a result of the experiment in the Rokuko-made Feni garden area that had a door to [Fire Cavern], normal dungeon monsters were found to be worth a very small amount of DP.

For monsters with the authority to use the menu, it became 0 DP.

So I guess that's why Chloe was 0 DP?

"Heeh. So that happens when ye make them able to use the menu eh? That's enough, [Burning Fire]."

When Ontentoo said that, the fire spirit exhaled a puff of fire and returned. By the way, it's name, [Burning Fire], appears to mean 'burning fire' in Draconic. I'm hearing it like that because of Translation Function-san, so Redra's probably the one that named it. It really does give the feeling of a plume of fire soaring into the sky though... Does that mean there kinds of fire that don't burn for Dragons?

"That guy's a cheap and easy-to-use guy for our dungeon."

"Really... it's a bit hot for our dungeon. Might be good to put in Feni's area though."

When I looked at the catalog, I saw [Fire Spirit: 400,000 DP]. Expensive.

"Aah? Ah, it's about 200,000 for us. I'm a Salamander after all."

"Now that you mention it, there was that, huh."

... Or maybe it has something to do with them owning the majority of Tsuia Mountain?

Either way, the core, Ontentoo, is a Salamander, and his master, Redra, is a Red Dragon. Moreover, their dungeon's located in a volcano, so it's obvious that they'd be extremely specialized in fire. It's natural that a Fire Spirit would be cheaper for them.

"Couldn't you change your monsters to not have menu access to earn DP?"

"... That'd be no good. Even if that Fire Spirit from a bit ago didn't have menu access, it'd just be 20 DP a day yeah? The efficiency loss isn't worth it."

"Yeah. Another thing I was thinking about was sending monsters to other places."

With this, that's one thing figured out.

It's easy for monsters sent from one dungeon to another to be exposed. All the more if they have access to the menu since they'll be worth 0 DP.

... Setsuna's true identity is some dungeon's monster that has access to the menu, huh?

At any rate, I now know the conditions for being worth 0 DP without being a core or master.

Should I try out getting them to a place with a Dummy Core using a pitfall trap or something?

Chapter 212 - An Invitation

And so I decided to try guiding Setsuna to a Dummy Core with a pitfall trap or something.

... As for the elder sister, Nayuta, hmm, I want to separate them first. What to do, what to do...

By the way, concerning the rice I sold to Nayuta, an envoy came from a Wakokuan company that's in Paveura. He made a down payment of forty gold coins and took the bag.

It's definite that they won't be running away. When I told that to Wataru, he just said, "Yeah, I knew they wouldn't run," even though his expression looked like he was relieved. Anyone could've noticed that.

"... By the way, Wataru. How long are you going to be staying here? You usually head back after two or three days."

"Ah, Haku-san gave me a bit of a longer holiday than usual since I was so busy last month. I'll be here for a bit longer, alright?"

Now that he mentions it, his schedule was packed to the brink during the Dungeon Battle.

It's a rare chance, so I guess I'll have him help me out.

Setsuna and Nayuta would probably want to go together with Wataru if he invited them to go into the dungeon.

"In that case, could you bring those sisters into the dungeon? You see, quite a bit of stuff coming from this dungeon is stuff from Japan, so you'd be able to give them more details on it all, yeah?"

"That's true, but you could do it as well since you're also a hero..."

"Oi oi, are you dreaming there Wataru? I haven't said anything like me being a hero. My parents are Japanese though."

"I-believe-you."

He answered in monotone. This guy sees me 100% as a Hero, doesn't he? But I did imply that I had a super skill before, so that might be why. Let's give removing that misunderstanding a shot.

“Come to think of it, Heroes get skills that are way more amazing than normal ones right?”

“Eh? Yeah. Doesn’t Kehma-san have a skill like that too? A cool one with restrictions so that you can only use it in order to protect your comrades.”

“Ah, that was a lie. It was the first time I’d met a Hero that isn’t one of my parents so I wanted to try bluffing. It’s a bit late for me to say it, but I don’t have a skill like that.”

“Eh... i-is that so?”

Wataru was clearly shaken.

By the way, note that I said ‘a Hero that isn’t one of my parents’. I didn’t say that my parents were Heroes. I also don’t have a skill that can only be used to protect my comrades, so none of it was a lie. Look at how honest I am!

“It was just a simple trick. If you knew what the trick was, you’d be laughing a lot more right now than back in that mock fight.”

“... Why are you telling me that now?”

“There’s no reason to keep up the act anymore, it’s not like you’re going to skip out on your debt yeah?”

“Mumumu... you’re right. I will compensate you for wagering your comrades, Kehma-san.”

Wataru shrugged his shoulders and agreed. Seriously, this guy’s too honest.

“By the way, could you tell me the trick?”

“What foolishness are you saying? That’s my livelihood. Who’d tell you that?”

“Yeah... By the way, my [Super Luck] went up to Lv 2, so I could probably even do something like rolling three sixes with three dice. And I’ve been winning every time at that rat race, so Ichika-san banished me from the game room in tears.”

“Oh, don’t go and spin the slots in the bar then, Hero. You wouldn’t want to go and ruin this village’s market.”

“Yeah~. Well, my earnings from that was reduced by buying pudding though.”

His [Super Luck] became Lv 2 huh.

... In other words, Haku-san had him capture a dungeon somewhere.

Rather, Wataru’s blabbing on way too much about his skill. It’s convenient for me though.

Ah, let's bring the topic back to Wataru taking those sisters into the dungeon. It's just that although they'll go because of Wataru, Wataru's going to be a hindrance. I have something just for that.

"Ah, right. I'd like you to bring Nerune along with the sisters."

"Nerune-san?"

I'll have him bring Nerune along in order to guide them all and keep Wataru from saying anything unnecessary. Two birds, one stone. Delicious.

"Yeah. In truth, a new facility was discovered recently. Nerune's been wanting to check it out."

"A new facility?"

"It's some small room that can give you an item if you stay in it for twelve hours. It looks like it usually just gives money, but if you're lucky, you could even get a magic sword at no risk to yourself."

"Heeh. [If you're lucky], you say?"

"Yeah. [If you're lucky]. Want to give it a shot?"

As the holder of [Super Luck], Wataru's peerless as far as luck is concerned. We're actually the ones deciding what comes out, but it's a good way of saying it to entice Wataru.

"I was thinking about taking Nerune there myself, but now you're here."

"... In other words, you're wanting me, a hero, to do it? I'm expensive, you know."

"What, you want to be alone with the two girls somewhere without Nerune?"

"Please stop... I'll guarantee Nerune-san's safety with my name as a Hero."

It's easy to see he likes her.

"Huh? Was Nerune-san an adventurer?"

"What're you on about? There's a dungeon right here next to us. There's even a branch of the Adventurer Guild right in front of it. It's super convenient for people who want to be adventurers, even low ranked ones. She's E-Rank though."

"Kehma-san, please tell me that it was so that she could dive into dungeons together with me."

"... Well, you're not wrong."

“Yahoooo!”

By the way, all three of the girls are E-Rank. I forcibly raised their successful commission count by making them work at the inn through the guild. I even fixed it so that their battle tests used our golems.

Now then, if Nerune does it right, the only person to make it to the Dummy Core will be Setsuna. I’ll need to remodel that facility a bit beforehand. There are people there so I can’t do much though~

*

With that, Wataru went to dive into the dungeon with the other three on the next day.

This place was practically Nerune’s home and Setsuna and Nayuta were accustomed to being adventurers, so there weren’t any problems at all.

“Really~, we can relax since we’re with the hero~, right~?”

“Ahahaha! Leave it to me, Nerune-san! Ah, there’s a trap right there, watch your step.”

“Eh~?”

“Woah—! Ah, huh... it was just a stone arrow huh?”

... It’s her home, but Nerune still walked into the trap. She’s alright since Wataru protected her though.

Nerune, you’re acting, right? You didn’t seriously get caught by it, right? And it looked like Wataru got hit in a spot on his upper arm that doesn’t have any armor on it... why’s he unhurt? It was a stone arrow meant for beginners though.

“The arrow didn’t do anything to Hero-sama...”

“Ha ha ha! Even if I look like this, I’ve been training! I received a certificate from Haku-sama saying that I’m at a level beyond human!”

“Amazing! Could I try stabbing you with a knife?”

“Please don’t. It’ll bring up memories of me being stabbed for training...”

Yep, he’s not human anymore.

“Oh~? It’s Goblin-san~. Ahaha~”

“A Goblin appeared, huh—wait, why’s it casually waving back at you!?”

“Right, Nerune-san. Goblins turn into fertilizer through alchemy. Its body is still

plenty good as fertilizer without being processed though.”

“Is that so, Nayuta-san~? Hoeh~, you learn something new every day~... Ah, it ran away~”

“W-well, let’s ignore the Goblin. Shall we move on?”

With various things happening, they made it through the labyrinth safely and reached their destination.

Chapter 213 - Introductions

Led by Hero Wataru, the group made its way to the corner of the former riddle area, a place called the [Avarice Lodge].

“Huh, there’s a shop in a place like this?”

“Oh? ... Preserved food and rental books? Heeh. It’s pretty expensive, but it’s nice to have.”

Although there was a room with the main cubicles lined up, there was a place in front of it inside the range of the safety zone for people to shop.

“I can’t even think of this place as a dungeon with this shop here.”

Wataru spoke with a wry smile.

The Dyne Firm, well, our village’s ministry of finance put a serious shop here when I was talking with them about something that reminded me of those cafes that let you rent manga while you’re there. I was the one talking about it, but it surprised even me.

I wondered how they’d make a profit from consumers with something that shouldn’t exist like that, but it appears they make a profit by only keeping the store open for a short window of time. It goes by following the idea that its main consumers will match their timing up with it.

“So you have to pay in advance or show your Adventurer Guild Card to rent a book, huh. You can’t skip your bill that way.”

“They have hard bread and jerky... haven’t seen this kind of bread recently, huh...”

Nayuta and Setsuna paid for books and food respectively. There were both textbooks and storybooks there to rent, but it looks like Nayuta went with renting a storybook.

“This has got to be the weird facility that was discovered recently~”

Nerune already knew about the facility, but only from the management side of it. This was the first time she’d gone the normal way.

We were going with her really wanting be brought there to see it, so she was

looking at the small rooms like they were super interesting to her.

“Well, let’s give them a go. Twelve hours is a bit long, though.”

“Maybe it’ll be easier to kill time if we split into pairs?”

Nayuta responded to Wataru’s statement with an extremely proper idea. After all, spending twelve hours alone is quite a long time.

“Please wait~. Our time is limited~, so wouldn’t it be better to get more chances in one try~? There’s enough rooms for it~”

“Y-yeah. It’d be bad for me to make a pair among those here wouldn’t it!”

“... Right. Let’s go with one person per room then.”

Thanks to Nerune’s intervention, we succeeded in safely breaking everyone up. Now we’re done with the first step.

“I borrowed some futons from Kehma-san, please use them.”

“Oh? How thoughtful.”

“Okay~, let’s meet again in twelve hours~”

The four each entered a stall after Wataru laid out a futon in each of them. With the hourglasses turned upside down, the twelve-hour timer began.

*

Only a single hour had passed, but Setsuna was already getting bored. Giving up, she decided to try and get into her futon and sleep, but it didn’t look like she was tired.

Is it about time?

I called Rokuko over. She joined me in the Master Room within three seconds of me calling her.

“The true identity of those sisters will finally be revealed!”

“Maybe.”

Manipulating the Golem, I prepared a letter from the backside of the room Setsuna was waiting in. The timer was still going, but I dropped the letter down into the place that the items come out from. I hadn’t put the letter into an envelope and just folded it twice, but it still rang out as it hit the bottom. It looked like Setsuna, who didn’t know what to do with her spare time, noticed it.

[Nn? ... It hasn't been twelve hours yet has it?]

Setsuna reached out for the letter timidly.

The letter was written in a very official manner, reading: [If you wish to have a conversation, please press against the wall beneath the hourglass.]

Looking like she'd figured it out with that, Setsuna didn't look worried in the least and pressed against the wall.

The wall shifted backward. Once it had moved around twenty centimeters back, it started sliding sideways. The wall with the hourglass on it was a Golem, so it could move on its own. The gimmick was just so that I could operate it from here and see Setsuna's reaction.

The other side of the wall had a passage, followed by a stairway after a little while. It was originally a passage meant for employee-use only, but I redecorated it a bit for appearances.

[I guess it wants me to advance?]

She advanced slowly.

Then, Setsuna arrived in the small room that I'd ran the Golem back to wait on standby in. It's the Messenger Golem with the ability to talk that I'd made a while back.

I put it there to stop her in the off chance she went to destroy the Dummy Core.

[A... Golem?]

Setsuna tilted her head upon seeing the golem sitting with its back against the wall. Activating the golem, I used it to talk to her.

"Yo. Nice to meet ya, how're you?"

Hearing the thick voice that sounded like it had been run through a voice changer, Setsuna reacted with a start.

[The Golem talked!?!]

"Hahaha, what's so weird? You came to talk yeah? Wouldn't it be impossible if I couldn't talk?"

[Ah, un... I guess?]

Setsuna nodded in doubt. She was wary, but it looked like she did intend to have a talk with me.

[What are you?]

“I’d like to check with you first, what do you think I am?”

[... ... A Golem?]

“It’s as you see, but is that all?”

[Umm... a dungeon monster?]

“That’s also correct... is that all?”

When I emphasized that last part, Setsuna thought for a moment before speaking like she was having to squeeze her voice out.

[... Are you—a Dungeon Core?]

“Well, it’s that kind of feeling.”

It looks like Setsuna concluded that the Golem was a Dungeon Core. Cores and bosses being one-in-the-same is a commonly known ‘fact’, so I still can’t make a judgement on her identity... nn? Weren’t they called dungeon bosses? I could narrow it down further if she’d said Dungeon Master, but... yeah, this is taking too long. I’ll try asking her myself.

“Please, call me Euma. So, what are you?”

[I’m Setsuna. Just an ordinary adventurer~!]

“Let’s try asking again—what are you?”

[Asking again? A Wakoku spy!]

“That’s not all, is it?”

[That’s right, I’m actually...! A certain Dungeon Core’s child!!]

Setsuna declared it with an unnecessary pause. Ah, so she was connected to a dungeon after all—wait, did she just say... child?

Oi hold up, Dungeon Cores can reproduce?

I looked toward Rokuko. Realizing my thoughts, Rokuko blushed and started banging her hands against me.

Judging by her reaction... she can? Or not? Which is it?

... I take it Haku-san knows? Yep, can’t ask her. She’d kill me.

She’d said that the Emperor had the founder’s bloodline, but I don’t know if that meant Haku-san’s bloodline since she didn’t say.

Alright, let’s ask clearly. Can Dungeon Cores have children?

“Ummm, was that a metaphor?”

[It was literally.]

“While we’re on the subject, what’s the core’s name?”

[... Ummm, Core 410—I think that’s how you all say it? He’s my papa!]

A number I don’t know. I’d thought that she was definitely involved with Core 4, but I just heard it from Ontentoo. I guess the timing was just too good.

Incidentally, she said that she had a different father than Nayuta, but I’m convinced this is the reason she’s worth 0 DP.

“Rokuko, do you know about Core 410?”

“Nn~... nope, sorry!”

Yeah... there’s not even much known about the famous cores.

It was clumsy, but the self-introduction ended like that. I already learned the gist of what I was wondering though.

Ah, I still haven’t asked what her goal is. Well, she’s talking with me like this, so although I don’t think it’s going to be a violent goal—let’s try asking bluntly.

Chapter 214 - Question Time 1

Now then, guess I'll try asking Setsuna what her goal is directly.

"Let me ask this first. What's your goal? I don't want you to do something violent here, could you pardon me if I'm your enemy?"

I said it at the start, but this is practically all of what I want to know left.

[I don't want to be hostile either. There's something I'm looking for, so I'm gathering information, I guess? Well, as an adventurer, I'm going to be hunting a few monsters, so... sorry?]

Setsuna apologized and clapped her hands together. Her breasts shook a bit.
... And now Rokuko's kicking me lightly. Why?

It's natural for adventurers to hunt monsters, so there's no problems with her hunting monsters as an adventurer... ah, the Goblins? Is it because she'd be hunting Goblins? Seriously, Rokuko's hopeless when it comes to her Goblin fetish. She can endure somewhat, but I'd like it if she could keep her Goblin preferences under check even with them being hunted.

Still though, information, is it? She's still being a bit vague. The contents of that information might a hostility.

"... I don't mind, I assumed that... So, you want information? Sure, if I know it and you pay, I'll answer."

[Pay? ... No way, with my body!?]

"What're you saying to a Golem? Or were you meaning working as a boss at this dungeon?"

[I mean, don't dungeons eat corpses? If you told me to chop off my arm or something, I don't think I'd want to...]

"Ah, don't worry about that. Money's fine, so are items. I'm even good with information."

[That's pretty normal...]

"You would prefer a non-normal exchange? Then I'll also accept a leg."

[No, normal is good~, I'm great with normal~!]

Setsuna hurriedly agreed to negotiation. And I got pinched by Rokuko.

What? Even for me, taking a leg would be too extreme, I wouldn't want it.

[Come to think of it, you didn't call my companions? Or did you call them to a different room?]

"To answer that question... ah, whatever. I'll make this one a freebie since you told me so much in your introduction. The others are still in those stalls."

[... Not as hostages, right?]

"Who knows? I'll answer that question for a copper coin as payment. I don't mind if you suggest a payment yourself either."

Setsuna presented the copper coin.

"They're not really hostages. That room's a safety zone to start with so there's nothing I could do to them anyway."

[That's great.]

"Now that the tutorial's out of the way, let's move on with it."

Setsuna nodded. Well then, let's hear her questions.

[The first thing I want to know is about the black wolf. Could you tell me if you know anything about it?]

"The black wolf? That's too vague, I don't know what to talk about. Could you be a bit more specific?"

[Nnn, then... the black wolf that was staying in this dungeon for a while—do you know about it?]

"I do. For that information, hmm..."

I'm also wanting to collect information for the payment, but I can't really think of anything I want to ask.

"... If you tell me [where Core 410 is], I'll tell you some of what I know."

[Where papa is? ... Nnn, alright. You know the ship that leaves for Wakoku from Pavuera? There's an island on the way there. I think it was called Bania Island?]

Bania Island. Let's remember that.

"I'll tell you what I know then. That thing was named [Rin]. He spent the whole winter snug in this dungeon. That spot you guys were at used to be a riddle area, but it got destroyed by it. I left it alone because fixing it was troublesome... It left once spring came."

[I see... it does have the same name as what we're chasing.]

"If you want to hear a more detailed account, could you tell me why you're chasing Rin?"

[Hmm. It's grandma's pet. It ran away, so we're chasing after it...?]

Dungeon Cores don't have grandmas though... if there were something, it'd be a grandpa, [Father]... Ah, she could be like an old neighborhood lady couldn't she? Let's confirm.

"That grandma you mentioned, who is she? Your actual grandmother?"

[Un, my grandma. Mama's mama.]

"... So in other words, it's alright to send you the bill for the damages to the dungeon?"

[Send that straight to grandma please... you don't inherit debts, after all.]

"Then where is this grandma of yours? I'd like to send her the bill."

[If I knew that, one of our journey's goals would be done with. Haah...]

Setsuna sighed. Now I want to know just who that grandma is.

[So, the rest of the information about Rin?]

"Ah... it's not to the point of being its weakness, but salt was effective against it. It seemed to hate it. Its favorite food was the white plates that can be found in this dungeon. While on the subject, it didn't die even after having a hole punched through it. I believe that it's actually a slime. Since you said it's a pet, the owner might have more information."

[W-woah... that info was more intense than expected. It was raised by grandma after all...]

"Well, it's good you got what you wanted. So, your grandma, you didn't say anything about her."

[... Nnn~, it's a secret. I'd have to exchange it with some pretty huge information to tell you.]

Ah, so it finally happened. She gets how this works now eh?

"That so? Well then, ask your next question."

[Hmm~. Guess it's time to ask. Do you know anything about rice?]

"Rice? Yeah, I'll tell you if you tell me about your grandma."

[Ah, pass. I don't care that much about the rice.]

Oh? Unfortunate. Even though I was thinking about giving her a seed. Just one though.

“Anything else?”

[Nnn, ah. That black haired dog ear girl living outside the dungeon, you know her?]

Meat huh. She called her Toy or something.

“I know of her. What about her?”

[Is that child connected with the dungeon somehow?]

“You’ll have to pay five copper coins for my response.”

Setsuna quickly held out five copper coins, so I accepted them.

“... Hmm. I can’t answer that.”

[Eh—but I just paid the five copper!?]

“That was the price for the knowledge that I couldn’t answer. That’s why it was so cheap, no need to shout. I mean, what kind of connection are you talking about to start with? You could even say that adventurers hunting monsters is a kind of connection.”

[... How should I say this... was she given a special power or something?]

“Ah, that’s included in the stuff that I can’t answer. If there’s some circumstances, maybe try asking another way?”

[Muu. It feels like you’re the one getting information.]

“It’s not like I could tell you something without knowing that you want it. Right, if it’s about that dog eared girl, she likes that man that’s always near her a lot. Is that information what you wanted? It’s inconsequential right?”

[... Ooh.]

Why’d she bite at that? Does she like romance stories?

Even Rokuko sunk her teeth into it.

“Wh—... at? Meat... likes Kehma?”

“Oi, Rokuko. That’s a surprise?”

“... Kehma likes me the most though, right?”

“Ah, yeah. You’re number one. You even have that ring yeah?”

“It’s all good then!”

I don’t really get it, but I guess it’s alright.

Chapter 215 - Question Time 2

Setting Rokuko aside, let's keep asking Setsuna questions.

"What type of core is Core 410? Beastkin-type?"

[I don't really know. He might've been a rabbit?]

Setsuna's animal ears that looked like neither a rabbit's nor a dog's moved.

... Which reminds me, her younger sister, Nayuta, had a different father. Their family is beyond complicated, or maybe that's just how it is for beastkin? If that's the default, then it's not like I can't understand the feelings of those guys preaching their human supremacy doctrine either.

"I see, so your mother is a dog-type? Does that black dog eared person have any relation to that?"

[Mmm, I'll tell you the answer... if you tell me about rice.]

"Sure. You can obtain it in a certain part of this dungeon. The location's a secret."

I decided to just answer her with inconsequential information.

That's not a lie either since Setsuna can obtain it by buying it at the inn.

[So this dungeon is where the rice comes from... no way, Hero-sama came to this dungeon to get rice...?]

"So, the dog eared person?"

[Why do you even care? Isn't she just a normal adventurer as far as the dungeon's concerned?]

"She's a regular here. She's weaker than a Hero, but she's strong for her size. I'm a little concerned about it."

[Hmm...]

Did that convince her?

Setsuna stroked one of her ears.

[I have a younger sister, Nayuta.]

"That blonde dog eared person that came in with you? I heard you guys say something like that when you dove into the dungeon."

[... Un. Well, I have other dog-eared family members than Nayuta too. Grandma took them away though.]

That grandma again? Aggressive, isn't she?

"And that black dog eared person is...?"

[There's a possibility, I guess?]

Then 'Toy' was a name referring to that kind of thing? Also looks like a different father.

"Do you have any way to tell?"

[A genuine Toy would know about a certain thing... but I don't know since she her memory was erased.]

"Wouldn't you be able to tell if she was your younger sister to start with?"

[I think I'd be able to tell by smelling her scent, but I'm not sure if I could if grandma messed with her. If I sniffed her all over and compared her to Nayuta for an hour...]

I see, that'd be troublesome. Something like that wouldn't even be possible without some kind of other confirmation though.

But I'd know why Meat's so strong if she was a Toy.

It might not be a bad idea to try out lending her as a hug pillow for a night for confirmation.

"Your grandma, seriously, who is she? What kind of information do you want for that?"

[... Mmm, information on where grandma is...?]

"I don't even know who your grandma is, how would I have information on where she is? At least tell me her name."

[... Her name is Leona. As for her age... I don't know it. She looks about the same age as me though.]

An immortal-type? Seriously, what the heck is this grandma... She's not human right?

[She's a dangerous person with black hair and red eyes. She doesn't have animal ears though.]

"Black hair and red eyes, huh...? What race is she?"

[... I don't really know, but it's one with no honor. A Succubus or something?]

For a few moments there I was thinking she might've been a Hero, but a Hero wouldn't have red eyes right?

"Rokuko, do Succubi normally have black hair and red eyes?"

"The only Succubus I've seen is Chloe, but she's blonde."

That so? Then maybe there's a chance that she has Hero blood in her too? But really, Succubus, beastkin, and Dungeon Core... isn't she too mixed? There's so much blended together there that I can't even figure out what's what anymore. Even her gender's been mixed up.

"Setsuna's way too mixed."

"But Kehma, aren't you both Hero and Dungeon Master?"

... Even if I'm the one saying it, I'm pretty alright. Does mixing light and darkness cause the ultimate to appear?

"Rather, what's with the multi-species marriage?"

"Oh? Aren't Kehma and I partners?"

"Ah, un."

Eh, huh? ... Huh?

While I was busy being puzzled, Setsuna poked the Golem.

[Helloooo? You awake?]

"Y-yeah. I was just thinking about something there. I do know a Succubus, but they're blonde."

[Who?]

"Would you give me some information on your grandma for that information?"

[... Nnn~, just a bit.]

We came to an agreement, so I told her about Haku-san's butler, Chloe.

"She's [White Labyrinth]'s Succubus... I don't know if you could meet her or not though."

[Hmm, my turn then. Grandma can change her appearance. In a pretty special way too.]

... The heck. So I can't even rely on that information about her having black hair and red eyes now can I?

She could even be using however many aliases she wants, so that might have just been her name and appearance back then?

“.... Isn’t finding her impossible then?”

[But even grandma would only seldomly change her appearance... at the very least, she was using that black hair and red-eyed appearance eight years ago. Also, a Succubus should be able to tell that something’s [Different] about her.]

I see, so I found out that I should be careful about Succubi. I have plenty of extra DP, so maybe I should prepare a Succubus?

“Well, I’ll keep an eye out for her.”

We just chatted about trifling things after that, then I had Setsuna head back to the small room. Twelve hours passed peacefully after that and Setsuna and the others all got suitable items.

Nerune got something too, a potion.

Ah, I had Wataru get a two liter bottle of Japanese sake. It took quite a lot of the DP I got from him, but he was really pleased with it. Looks like he’s going to be coming again some time.